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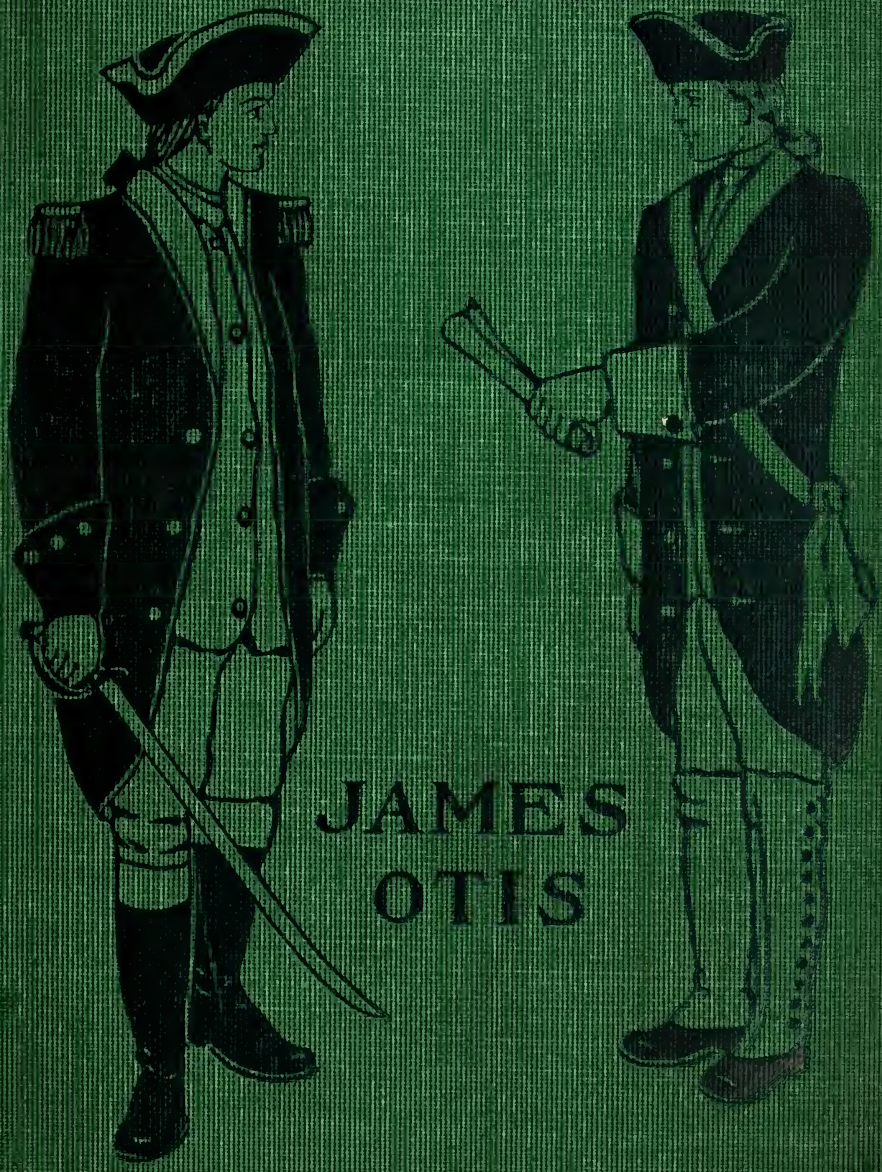

JAMES OTIS

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THE MINUTE BOYS OF BOSTON

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"AND WE DID CHECK THEM!"

THE MINUTE BOYS OF BOSTON

BY

JAMES OTIS

Author of "The Minute Boys of Long Island," "The Minute Boys of Wyoming Valley," "Boys of '98," "Teddy and Carrots," "Boys of Fort Schuyler," "Under the Liberty Tree," etc., etc.

Illustrated by
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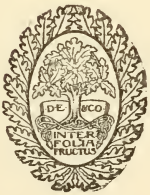

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THE MINUTE BOYS OF BOSTON

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THE MINUTE BOYS OF BOSTON

CHAPTER I

WHY WE WERE ENROLLED

ARCHIE HEMMING is as straight-headed a boy as was ever raised in Boston town, and he insists that, while we are seemingly idling our time away here in the Cambridge camp, I ought to set down what small share we lads of Boston have had in beating the lobster backs, for certain it is we have done our share, and no less a man than General Israel Putnam has told us plainly that we have already been of great aid to the Cause.

After such praise as that it would not be strange if we allowed ourselves to be puffed up with pride, more especially because we can recall many a time since a baker's dozen of us took the high sounding name of "Minute Boys of Boston," when we have come off best in a tussle with the king's soldiers or the rascally Tories.

It may seem a matter of surprise to those who have not had a hand in teaching his majesty a long-needed lesson, that there should be in this colony of ours, men, and boys too, who could be so evil minded as to do all they might against those who were shedding their blood, or imperilling their

lives, to release them from the oppressive yoke of English misrule, but such was, and is, the fact.

During my short life, for I am not yet turned fifteen years, I have been in more danger, and suffered more of hardships from and through Tories, our own neighbors and alleged friends, than ever came my way by the efforts of the red-coated soldiers who allowed to whip us off-hand, before getting a taste of our metal at Breed's hill — I can never bring myself to speak of that battle as having taken place at Bunker hill, for the simple reason that we did not fight there.

Archie, who is sitting nearby with Silas Brownrigg, looking over my shoulder to make certain I keep steadily and correctly at the task he has assigned me, says that he did not count on my beginning the story in such a roundabout way, for he wants to see in black and white, as soon as may be, an account of what we Boston Minute Boys have done thus far in the war against the king.

Now it seems to me that I ought to begin this tale with the reason why some of us Boston lads decided it might be possible for us to work in behalf of the Cause, and in order to do that I must hark back to what has been done these two years past to us of Boston by the king, and those hangers on of his who counted on grinding us into the dust as if we were made of baser stuff than they.

We lads, being young, did not realize all the iniquity of which General Gage was capable, when his acts were purely political, and, perhaps, gave but little heed to our elders when we heard them predicting that he would ruin the colony if it should not be possible to check his unlawful career; but

when on the first day of June, in the year of grace 1774, he closed our port of Boston to all vessels save those of the king's, shutting us up like mice in a trap to starve, or leave the colony as fugitives, then did we realize that the moment had come for something more than talk.

General Gage had brought soldiers from Halifax, Quebec, New York and even Ireland, to keep us of Boston in subjection to him, until the lobster backs out-numbered our people two to one, or so it seemed to me, and when he had us cooped up, through having set his hirelings to guard the Neck, thereby preventing us from going out, or our friends of the country from coming in, then did he crown the height of his oppression by making declaration that the port was closed to all.

He had under his command ships of the king enough to enforce this unrighteous act, and there we were, much the same as tied hand and foot. The poor people became beggars because there was no work by which they could earn money to buy food, while the rich found that with all their wealth it was impossible to purchase what was not for sale because of the scarcity, and meanwhile the king's lobster backs fed on the fat of the land, devouring us and our substance as did the locusts that were sent to aid the children of Israel.

Had it not been for the people in the other colonies who sent us rice, wheat and even money, there were many in our town of Boston who would have died of starvation. Why even the charitable men of London, who must have understood that we were being wronged, subscribed one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the poor among us.

I have heard it said that even the most cowardly

animal will fight when he is cornered and his life threatened, and so it was with us. The men banded themselves together as if for war, and made ready for the struggle which all knew must be near at hand, unless his majesty should succeed in gaining better sense than he had shown since our people built up for him a nation in this New World.

We lads did not believe it possible we could do anything at such a time; but looked forward to the day when, having come to man's estate, we might enlist as soldiers to drive out General Gage, and such as he, from among us.

Then the fortifications on the Neck were strengthened, the better to hold us prisoners; all the gunpowder belonging to the province that had been stored at Charlestown and Cambridge was seized by the man who had made of himself our jailor, and we were terrified by rumors that the king's ships were about to open fire on the town because our people were arming themselves.

The true men of New York, Connecticut, Vermont, and from all the country roundabout Boston, rose up in their might, marching at their best pace to our assistance, and General Gage must have understood that he was stirring up a hornet's nest, for the rumors were denied, and those who would have begun the war then and there, returned to their homes.

If you will believe it, there were, at the close of the year 1774, eleven regiments of British soldiers in Boston, to say nothing of all the artillery, and yet more were coming. Five hundred marines were landed from the Asia Man-of-War, and thousands of lobster backs were voyaging from the Jerseys, New York, and Quebec!

Was it any wonder that we of Boston were the same as eaten out of our homes? These men wearing red-coats were not suffered to lack for the best of food; but it mattered little what we colonists had, and yet there were those among us, born and bred in Boston town, who claimed that General Gage was acting the part of an honest man!

At the beginning of the year 1775 no less than an hundred and fifty soldiers were on duty at the Neck night and day, and yet our people were able to send past them secretly such of weapons and ammunition as were to provide us, at a later date, with what might be needed to uphold our rights. Even the youngest among us understood that the day was not far distant when we must stand face to face with the lobster backs in battle array, if we would preserve our own rights, and every article which might be used in the coming struggle was smuggled under the noses of the guards.

Our fathers sent out muskets in loads of manure, cartridges in candle boxes, pistols and swords in the baskets of such market women as were permitted to enter the town that they might bring provisions for the king's soldiers, and the loyal men of Boston had collected at Cambridge quite a store of what would be needed when the time came that blood must be shed. Then, suddenly, the thick-headed lobster backs discovered what was being done, and scores upon scores of firearms were captured by them.

Many of our people had fled the town by this time; but a large number yet remained. My father, Samuel Wright, had lately gone to Cambridge on business. We were then living on Lyn street, close by the old ship-yard near Hudson's

point, and not far away, that is to say, on Hull street opposite the burying place, was the home of Archie Hemming, the lad who sits near me at this moment watching every motion of mine lest I falter in the task he has set me. Silas Brownrigg lived on Salem street nearby the corner of Charter, and we three were close friends in those dark days when the king's men swaggered through the town, cuffing or kicking any of us lads who chanced to be in their high and mighty way.

Now it was on a certain evening near the middle of June that we three lads chanced to come upon Amos Nelson near the city dock. He, like all his father's brood, was that miserable thing known as a Tory, and we had no idea of bandying words with him, believing it beneath us to talk with such scum; but he was minded to pick a quarrel, believing that General Gage would soon drive us, who claimed to be true to the colony, from our homes.

Because of what happened shortly afterward, I believe the Tory cur had heard at home some inkling of what was to be done by the lobster backs, for never had I seen him so bold, who was ever somewhat of a coward.

I was the one he pitched upon to vent his spite, and when we would have passed him, he shouted in that squeaky voice of his which ever set my nerves on edge:

"Hi! there, Luke Wright, has that scurvy father of yours mended his ways yet, or does he think the king's officers will wait awhile before sending him to the gallows where he belongs?"

Now while I hold that no lad should take part in a street brawl, I ask what would any boy have done whose father had been thus assailed by one

who was not fit to speak his name? I set upon the miserable Tory so suddenly that he, taken unawares, so to speak, went down beneath me, and then I pummelled him as he deserved, until the cur howled for mercy, Silas and Archie standing by with hands in their coat pockets lest Amos Nelson should say afterward that the three of us had attacked him.

"You'll hear from me one day, in a way that won't be to your liking," Amos cried threateningly after I had allowed him to get up, and he had taken to his heels until having gotten a safe distance away. "We'll see what General Gage has to say when he knows how the king's friends are treated by you, who would be rebels if you had stomach enough to use your hands as well as you do your tongues!"

"You one of the king's friends!" Archie cried derisively. "If he picks his intimates from such spawn as you there's good reason why he has allowed these colonies of his to come to open rebellion against injustice."

"You've said it! You've said it!" the Tory cur cried as if in delight. "You've admitted that you are rebels, and the king's officers shall hear of what you say, for the time has come when they are marking such as you for future punishment."

"And what have they marked you for?" Silas asked with a laugh. "Are you counted on being able to act the part of a half-way decent scarecrow, or are you ranked as a lickspittle to some lobster back who hasn't yet learned to speak English?"

"Before we're many days older you shall come to understand some of the marks, and I'll be the

one to explain them in a way that won't be to your liking," Amos shouted, and just then he was bowled over by a clod of earth that Archie flung with an aim which would have done your heart good to see.

"There's what you call a rebel mark," the dear lad cried with a laugh at his own success, "and I'm counting you'll carry it longer than shall we that which the tyrant Gage puts upon us."

At that instant Archie was seized by the collar from behind, and I was near to letting out a cry of fear, for I counted as a certainty that some lobster backs, having overheard our words, were come to lend the Tory lad a hand.

Luckily the cry was choked before it escaped my lips, else I should have been bowed with shame, for on the moment I saw that it was none other than Doctor Warren who had seized Archie, and we lads knew him for one who would cut off his right hand rather than take the part of a Tory against a so-called rebel.

"Is it well to spend your time brawling on the streets with such as that lad, when there is work you might do in behalf of the Cause?" the doctor asked sharply, and, twisting himself round that he might look the good man squarely in the face, Archie cried:

"What is there that lads like us might do at such a time, sir? We are willing enough; but lack opportunity."

"I came out in search of one who can be trusted to carry a message into the country; but fail to find him. It strikes me that lads like you could be employed in such tasks, and thus give men full grown the opportunity of doing braver work

though nothing could be more important than my business of this night. Think you it would be possible to leave Boston within the hour, and without attracting the attention of the guards?" the doctor added after a brief time of thought.

"Ay, we can go out of Boston a dozen times over, 'twixt now and sunrise, without any lobster back being the wiser," I cried, determined if there was aught to be done in behalf of the Cause that night, I would have a hand in it.

"Are you the son of that Samuel Wright who lately left home to go to Cambridge, and has not yet returned?" the doctor asked, releasing his hold on Archie's collar that he might wheel about to face me.

"Ay, that I am, sir," was my reply, "and that he has left Boston on honest business Master Hancock himself can testify."

"There is no need of testimony as to his character so far as I am concerned," the gentleman said with a kindly smile. "I can trust his son, surely, knowing the father as I do. Now how might it be possible for you to leave this town secretly?"

"I have a boat hidden at the old ship-yard where the lobster backs will never be able to find her, and we three have been to Roxbury in her half a dozen times since the guard at the Neck have had their eyes opened, without any one's being the wiser. If so be you would send a message, we three can carry it, sir," and so eager was I for him to accept my services that I trembled like one in an ague.

"And who may this young gentleman be?" the doctor asked as he pointed at Silas Brownrigg, who was striving to make himself look as large as possible to the end that he might attract attention.

"My father is Robert Brownrigg, who has been enrolled among the Minute Men these many days, and has called himself a Son of Liberty since I can remember."

"I know him well, and now believe that one or all of you can serve me well and faithfully, meaning that you will be serving the Cause. I desire to send a message with all speed to Colonel James Barrett, who can be found about a mile this side the town of Lexington, at Samuel Hadley's home."

"We will carry your message, sir, and bind ourselves to deliver it before sunrise," I cried, burning with the desire to have a finger in this pie of rebellion against the king and General Gage.

"It is a written message I would send, and it will not be necessary for all three of you lads to undertake the journey — one can perform the task as well as a dozen."

"We three have always been close comrades, sir," Archie interrupted, "and while it may not be necessary that all should aid in carrying the message itself, two more hands in the skiff will shorten the journey to the Penny ferry, for there it would be well to take to the shore, rather than striving to work entirely around this town in order to gain the Cambridge river."

"The three shall have a part in the work," Doctor Warren cried, as if he had but just understood how eager we were to be of service to the Cause. "It is important that Colonel Barrett receive the missive before sunrise, and you are to set about the task as seems best to you, with the understanding that all are of equal rank in this matter. I will call you Minute Boys, and pledge my word that by seeking out the colonel at the earliest possible moment, you

will be doing as valuable work as any Minute Men in the colony."

There was little need for him to say more. We were literally burning with desire to be off on our first task that had to do with the Cause, and he could not have worked us up to greater enthusiasm had he preached all night.

"You have first to make your parents acquainted with what you are about to do," the doctor said with a smile because of our eagerness. "I have the message with me; but there is no good reason why you should carry it while making arrangements for departure, lest it be lost or seized, therefore do what may be necessary, and meet me at this place in half an hour."

We could hardly have moved more quickly if each had been provided with wings. In a twinkling the three of us were off, every lad headed toward his own home, and for my part, I know that it seemed as if I hardly gave myself time to breathe, so eager was I to return to the rendezvous in the shortest possible space of time.

As I look at the matter now, I can understand why my mother cried out against the venture, declaring it was work that should be undertaken by men, when I repeated to her what the doctor had said, and the tears came very near my eyelids as I pleaded with her, for it seemed just then as if I should never again have such an opportunity of serving the Cause. I urged that we had given our word to Doctor Warren; that we would be shamed, and he have reason to set us down as cowards, if we failed to do as had been promised, winding up my entreaties with the assertion that if father was at home he would insist most strongly upon my

doing whatsoever little I might in behalf of that effort to teach the king a lesson which seemed so near at hand.

I believe it was this last part of my argument which had most weight, for no sooner had I spoken of what my father would have me do, than she gave way, setting about making ready for me a small parcel of food before having said that she gave her permission.

Wild with delight, I gave little heed to the loving kiss she bestowed upon me, hardly returning it so eager was I to be again at the rendezvous, and taking the parcel without a word of thanks for her loving thoughtfulness, I hurried away at full speed, coming up with Archie in Salem street.

He also carried a parcel under his arm, and without slackening speed I ranged alongside him, asking, with difficulty because of my heavy breathing, if his mother had made any protest against his acting the part of messenger.

"At first she cried out that I should not risk my neck in a tom-fool matter; but when I made her understand that it was no less a man than Doctor Warren who required our services, she held her peace; yet I took note that the tears came into her eyes, as if she believed the business might be of danger."

"And so it is until we are ashore beyond Charlestown," I said with no little of satisfaction, for it pleased me to believe we were staking our lives, perhaps, on this venture which had to do with the Cause. "If our skiff is overhauled by the guards —"

"There isn't a king's boat, no matter of how many oars, that can overhaul us this night if we get well away from the ship-yard," the dear lad in-

terrupted sharply. "Give us three minutes the start, and I'll agree that the whole boiling of his majesty's navy may come full cry after us."

It would have pleased me better if he had allowed that there was much of danger in the enterprise; but I would not speak further of such possibility lest he believe I had grown faint hearted with thinking of what might be, and in silence we continued on our way, arriving at the appointed meeting place only to find Silas there awaiting us. He had been even more eager than we, if that could be possible, and was returned a full five minutes in advance, despite all our efforts to move swiftly.

Doctor Warren did not show himself until after what seemed like a very long time of waiting, and we had grown impatient, fearing lest he had found some other who might be more to his liking, to carry the message. Had we been shut out from the enterprise just then, I know for my part it would have seemed as if all the world had gone wrong, therefore it was that I could have cried aloud with joy when he came toward us as if having walked down Union street.

"Are you lads ready for the journey?" he asked, speaking softly and looking around cautiously like one who fears his words may be overheard.

"We will set off in one minute after receiving your directions, sir," I made haste to say, speaking hurriedly because I was in haste to have him commit the message to us at once so we might know none other could get in ahead of us.

"It is only that you deliver this into the hands of Colonel James Barrett, who may be found 'twixt now and sunrise at the home of Samuel Hadley, near Lexington," he said, taking a folded paper

from the inner pocket of his coat. "In case you arrive at whatsoever point you have decided upon, in safety, it will be well for one to procure a horse and rush on in advance, otherwise you may arrive too late —"

"We can trust our legs for getting us there as quickly as any farmer's nag could carry us," Archie interrupted with a laugh, and I was puffed up with pride when the doctor gave the paper into my keeping as he said gravely:

"It would work ill to the Cause if this was read by our enemies, therefore it must be destroyed in case you are like to be taken by any of the king's mercenaries."

"We won't be taken, sir," Archie said, speaking as if he was one who could read the future, like the witches they hanged at Salem. "Once we are under way in the skiff there is nothing in Boston harbor that can overtake us."

"Do not be over-confident, young gentleman," the doctor said in a tone of mild reproof. "While I do not admit that you will be in any serious danger, it is the part of a wise man to count all the cost, and give due heed to every possibility. Come to an end of your journey at the earliest moment, and until the message has been delivered, put no trust in strangers however fair they may speak you."

He stood looking at us as if everything necessary had been said, and, fortunately, I had wit enough to motion that my comrades follow me as I went toward the ship-yard without any other word to Doctor Warren, for at such times he who shows himself too ready to spend time in talking, gives proof that he may not be depended upon to work quickly.

The doctor made no effort to detain us; but, looking back over my shoulder, I saw that he remained as we had left him until the gloom shut him out from my view.

"I would we had been asked for a service of more importance than simply carrying a written message," Silas said in a tone that was almost one of discontent, as we made our way toward the place where my skiff was hidden, and Archie, ever cautious and wise, added in reproof:

"It is not well we say anything which might show that we are bent on an errand of importance, for no one can tell how many Tory ears may be hidden hereabout. We are going out for a sail, pleasing ourselves by showing that we three can leave this town of lobster backs whenever it is our pleasure to do so, and of more than that it is not necessary to speak."

I understood by the lad's tone that he looked upon this mission of ours as something which might be of vital importance to the Cause, and the fact that he deemed it dangerous for us even to discuss the business in the streets, went farther toward rendering me cautious than any words of the doctor's might have done.

Citizens of Boston, save they were rank Tories, were not given to roaming the streets of the town after nightfall, therefore we met but few while making our way to the ship-yard, and those few gave no heed to us. At this time the so-called rebels were so small in numbers as compared with our oppressors, that, save to make us the object of their sport, as Amos Nelson had attempted to do, little attention was given to us, most like because it was believed

we could not break through the net General Gage had thrown around us.

We arrived at the ship-yard without interruption, and then it behooved us to move with more of caution, for if so be the guards saw three lads embarking in a skiff, there would be little delay in halting them by means of a bullet.

Under what remained of a small wharf which had fallen into decay long before I could remember, we kept the craft, so securely hidden that he who would seek her out must needs have sharp eyes, and we had pulled away the timbers in such manner that it was possible to get on board and make ready for hoisting the mast and sail before hauling her out into view of any passer-by.

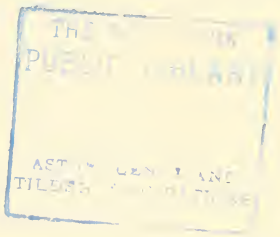
After making certain that we had not been observed, the three of us let ourselves down between the rotten timbers into the skiff, and while Archie and Silas took up the oars, I made ready for hoisting the spar, which was of no great weight or size.

"Now then!" Archie whispered. "It is not so dark but that we can be seen a long distance away, and until we are sheltered by the shore of Charlestown, it will not be well that we indulge in much speaking."

He gave way on the oar at the same moment; Silas did the same, and we were no more than well out from under the old timbers than I saw, even while raising the short spar, one of the guard-boats within less than an hundred feet.

It was the only time we had ever come upon the king's men in the dozen or more voyages we had made from Boston town simply through a spirit of bravado, and my heart leaped into my mouth, so to speak, for it seemed certain we were about to be

"I COULD HAVE TOSSED MY HAT ABOARD THEIR CRAFT."



called to an accounting before having gotten well started on our first mission in behalf of the Cause.

Fortunately Archie was a quick-witted lad, as I have said before, otherwise we should have been made prisoners in a twinkling; but he backed water with his oar before we were well out from the shadow of the old dock, thus forcing the skiff among the timbers instantly, and we three sat like statues, our hearts thumping loudly as trip hammers, waiting to learn whether the enemy had seen us.

There were no less than ten men in the guard-boat, and they were so busily engaged trying to explain one to the other exactly what General Gage ought to do in order to put a speedy end to the rebellion, as to have given no heed to anything near them.

They passed so near the head of the ruined wharf that I could have tossed my hat aboard their craft, and the only screen we had was the shadows cast by the timbers; but they saw us not. Going on their way in ignorance, and happy in the belief that at the first overt show of rebellion we of Boston would be crushed out of existence, the king's men continued their round, and verily it seemed as if the good God had interposed to render it possible for us lads to carry the message which had been entrusted to our keeping by Doctor Warren.

Not until they were so far in the distance that it was no longer possible to hear the sound of their oars, did we venture to draw a long breath, and then it was that Archie said in a whisper:

"Now then, Silas, pull well out into the current, and the sooner Luke gets the mast into place, the quicker we'll be heading toward Charlestown. Put

a hand over your oar to prevent any creaking, and don't open your mouth save when it is necessary to breathe."

Both Silas and I understood that Archie was the one who should act as commander of our small expedition, and we obeyed in silence, the skiff darting ahead once she felt the weight of the wind, as if understanding full well the need of speed.

Not until we were well off Morton's point did either of us venture to break the silence, and then Silas asked suddenly, as if he had been stewing over the matter for some time:

"Why shouldn't there be Minute Boys as well as Minute Men, and why, since we have begun to work for the Cause in good earnest, shouldn't we raise a company?"

CHAPTER II

RAISING A COMPANY

THAT which Silas proposed startled and at the same time surprised me. Of course there was no good reason why we lads should not be banded together in the service of the colony, and yet it seemed a forward thing to do, thus to ape our elders.

Archie, however, was greatly taken with the idea from the start, and Silas had hardly more than finished speaking when he cried, incautiously loud as it appeared to me:

"Well, and why shouldn't we raise a company of Minute Boys? What is there to prevent, if so be we are minded to stake our lives for the Cause, even as our fathers are doing?"

"It is for them to say whether we be permitted to bind ourselves together," I replied, having a doubt as to the wisdom of Silas's scheme, and yet wishing most fervently that it might be carried out.

"Think you your father or mine, Luke Wright, would set their faces against our raising a company of Minute Boys after Doctor Joseph Warren has seen fit to intrust to us a mission of importance? If we are capable of doing Master Warren's work, then of a verity have we proven our ability, if not our right, to serve the Cause as Minute Boys."

There was much of truth in what Archie said, and yet I could not bring myself on the moment to believe we might do what seemed a most venture-

some thing. Since, however, I could not well answer the arguments he brought up, I set about as if to throw cold water on the scheme, by saying with the air of a lad who knows it all:

"I fear it would be a small company we could raise, if, peradventure, we were forced to find all our recruits in Boston town. I believe truly that I can count on the fingers of one hand, all whom we could trust. Of course you would reckon on keeping the matter a secret if it so chanced that we set about enrolling lads?"

"Why?" Archie asked hotly. "What reason might we have for striving to keep secret the fact of having bound ourselves to aid the Cause as far as lays in our power?"

Again had the lad put forth an argument which I could not answer, and yet it seemed to me then as if we might better be able to aid our elders in the coming struggle if we hid our purpose from the enemy, and by the enemy, I mean such scurvy rascals as Amos Nelson, of whom we could find many in Boston town without straining ourselves overmuch in the search.

"It makes very little difference whether you keep the matter a secret or not," Silas interrupted, "if so be we can find lads who have sufficient of courage to join us. We will choose only those who are to be trusted, and, after consulting our elders, may, if so be they approve of the enterprise, hold the matter private or make it public as they advise."

I was not minded to continue the discussion just at that time, for it seemed to me we might better bring our mission to a successful end if we held our peace. Water, as one well knows, will carry

sound a long distance, and we were now so near the Charlestown shore that there could have been an hundred Tories or lobster backs hiding within the shadow of the foliage without our being the wiser. It was, therefore, with some petulance, mayhap, that I said:

"Whether we are to raise a company of Minute Boys or no, there is little possibility of getting very far in the scheme until after having returned to our homes. My idea is that, instead of speaking loudly of what we would do, it is best first to finish the business upon which we are embarked."

Then it was that Archie laughed heartily, and with great good humor, as he said cheerily, but without intending to throw anything of irony into his tone:

"There are times, Luke Wright, when you speak with much of good sense. Silas is at fault, and I also, because of raising our voices when it would have been better our tongues had remained quiet; but that which he proposed was at the same time so surprising and so satisfying that I forgot we were bound to carry out Master Warren's work before doing, or even thinking of, anything else."

"I will say no more about it," Silas added with a laugh; "but at the same time am bound to maintain that we can do as I have stated, if so be the matter is gone about in proper fashion, and when we are at the ship-yard once more I will lay before you lads the plan in something approaching due order."

It was then we ceased speaking and gave all our attention to the task in hand, as indeed we had need to, for no one could say how soon we might come

upon those who, mistrusting somewhat of our purpose and being enemies to the Cause, would put an end to our share of the night's work.

My comrades, as well as I, understood that we had need to gain the landing place as quickly as might be, for once on shore there remained a dozen or fourteen miles to be traveled before we were come to Lexington.

It is not needed that I should make a very long story of what ought to be told in few words, and therefore it is that instead of setting down all which we said and did from the time of beginning the journey afoot until we were come to our destination, I will content myself with saying that Doctor Warren's message was delivered before sunrise, and we lads, leg-weary and hungry, threw ourselves down upon the straw in Master Hadley's barn to wait until Colonel Barrett should say we were at liberty to depart.

Now all this had been plain sailing, and we should have found no reason to plume ourselves upon having done anything deserving of credit, for from the time we screened ourselves when the guard boat appeared, until having come to Master Hadley's house, no man had placed aught in our way. Yet I did feel somewhat of pride, thinking that we had done our first work in behalf of the Cause, all of which was folly as you may see, for surely three hulking lads need not carry their heads very high because of simply having sailed a skiff two or three miles and then walked a dozen more over a smooth highway.

I venture to say that Colonel Barrett did not hold us very high in his esteem because we had succeeded in delivering the message. He acted, as most like

he felt, as if it was nothing of consequence which we had done, save for the fact that he had received the information, and a single lad a dozen years of age might have accomplished the same end.

I would have been well content to remain stretched out at full length on the straw in Master Hadley's barn until another night had come, so weary was I from walking and worn with lack of sleep; but when Colonel Barrett summoned us to the house, evidently for the purpose of sending us back, we could not well make protest.

He had prepared a written reply to Doctor Warren's message, and this he handed to me as he said:

"You may return as soon as is your pleasure; it matters little whether Master Warren receives my reply early or late."

"It will not be safe for us to make a try at getting into Boston until after night-fall, therefore we may go our way leisurely," I said to the gentleman, addressing him as I believed it was proper a soldier should address his superior officer, which shows that Silas's idea of enrolling a company of Minute Boys had found speedy lodgment in my mind.

"Set off when you will, and see to it that the paper is delivered safely, although that which it contains is so worded as to convey little of importance to an enemy," he added carelessly, and turned from us as if to say that he was done with speaking, therefore we might go when it pleased us best.

Now I had had in mind when we left Boston, that having once arrived at this house of Master Hadley's as messengers from Doctor Warren, we would be received with open arms and greatly praised because of the valuable service rendered; but we were not even asked to stay our hunger, and

at that time I believe of a verity I could have eaten anything less hard than a flint.

However, not for all the food in Massachusetts colony would I have admitted that we stood in need of refreshments after so long a delay had been made in offering us any, and without further words I led the way down the lane to the road, Archie and Silas following close at my heels.

It was not until we had traveled a full mile that either of us ventured to speak, and then Archie said as if there was much which was comical in the situation:

"It seems that however highly we value ourselves, and whatsoever of importance we may attach to carrying a message from Doctor Warren to Colonel Barrett, no one else appears to be of our opinion. I had not thought they would kill a fatted calf for us as if we were Prodigal Sons; but surely some one might have asked, knowing we had traveled all night, whether or no a bit of corn bread would go amiss."

When he thus spoke we were come opposite a small, rude dwelling situate in one corner of a pasture wherein even a sheep would have found it difficult to satisfy its hunger, and in the door of this building stood a motherly looking old woman, her hands on her hips, and her eyes fixed on us in curiosity, as I fancied.

"You children are looking weary," she cried, and mayhap I bridled somewhat because she had called us who counted on soon being a portion of the Colonial army, "children." "Will you not wait and rest a while?"

I would have kept on, punishing my own body

because Master Hadley's people had failed to show hospitality; but Silas accepted the invitation without ado, and threw himself down upon the moss nearby the door as if too weary to advance any further.

After this had been done Archie and I could do no less than follow his example, at least so far as coming to a halt was concerned, and I soon forgot the vexation in my heart because of what I counted as neglect, for the old woman ministered to us in as kindly, generous a fashion as our own mothers would have done.

That she was not well off in this world's goods might readily have been told by her surroundings, yet did she give of what she had freely, buttering the coarse food with so many kindly words that I believe of a verity I shall never partake again of so appetizing a meal.

As a matter of course she asked many questions as to why we were in the neighborhood, and perhaps there was no reason why we might not have satisfied her curiosity without explaining everything; yet it did not seem to me well that we should make any one acquainted with our mission. Even after we were told that she had a son who was then in Cambridge ready and eager to serve the colony as a soldier, we held our peace, save in so far as we told her that we were bound on getting into Boston, where were our homes.

It was natural she should ask many questions as to what the British were doing; whether we were so shut in by the lobster backs that it was impossible for any to get out save with a written pass, and equally reasonable, since her son counted on

becoming a soldier, that she wanted to know if those who favored the Cause were ready to strike a speedy blow against the king's officers.

On all these points we gratified her curiosity in so far as lay in our power, meanwhile devouring her corn bread and fried pork without a thought as to whether we might not be depriving the poor soul of that which she absolutely needed to keep life in her shrivelled body.

We remained there an hour, and on taking our departure promised the good woman that we would on the first opportunity seek out her son, in order to tell him we had lately seen his mother.

Hiram Griffin was his name, so she told us, and I fixed it in my memory with little thought that the day would soon come when, because of keeping our promise to this old woman, we should be making the acquaintance of one who would befriend us in our time of sorest need.

Mistress Griffin bade us adieu as if we were her own kith and kin, and I for one felt the better for having come in touch with so kindly a soul after the neglect, as it seemed to me, of Samuel Hadley's people to minister to our needs.

During the remainder of the journey afoot we met, mayhap, a dozen farmers who lived on our line of march, and it seemed to me much as if they knew more concerning what the colonists would do in their own behalf than did we, who were so lately come from town. I noted, as also did Archie, so he told me later, that there was an air of anxious expectancy about all these people when, judging from our dress that we had come from Charlestown, or even Boston itself, they questioned us concerning the doings of the Sons of Liberty,

the enrollment of Minute Men, and the smuggling of weapons across the Neck.

I said to myself that there was some movement afoot among these men concerning which I had not heard, and then straightway reproved myself for being such a simple as to believe they knew more regarding the purpose of our friends than did I, who heard discussed every day measures which would soon be taken to relieve ourselves of the burdens which the king had put upon us.

As a matter of course we had no means of knowing, except through their own speech, whether those we met were Tories, or true sons of the colony, therefore it behooved us to be guarded in our words, putting trust in no man however fairly he spoke us, and verily some of those big-hearted farmers, who shortly afterward shed their blood so freely in the defence of the colony, must have set us down as being woefully churlish.

Now and then as we walked Silas would come back to the subject of enrolling a company of Minute Boys, persisting in discussing the matter whenever we were in the open country where it was possible to make certain there were none lurking nearby who might hear us, and so eager was he on the scheme, that before we were come to where the skiff had been left, just below the ferry, it was already settled in our minds that we would make the attempt on the following day, if so be we arrived at our homes in safety.

We had even decided among ourselves as to which of our acquaintances should be invited to share the glory that all felt certain would come to us, once we had been allowed to join those who were to stand against the king in defense of their

homes, and there yet remains as vividly in my mind as though it were yesterday that we walked from Master Hadley's to the ferry above Charlestown, all the details of the conversation we had concerning Seth Jepson.

We three knew the lad fairly well. He lived in Crooked lane, nearby Dock square, and was seemingly a kindly hearted youth, ready to do a favor for another even at his own expense; but yet I set my face against admitting him into the ranks of our Minute Boys, for no other reason than that I had often seen him in the company of Amos Nelson and two other young Tories.

Archie said my suspicions were idle because they had no other foundation than what I have set down, and that he might laugh me out of them he said with a grin:

"I have seen Baker's old gray goose paddling around among the chickens; but I never suspected him of being a rooster."

"Your wit is poor," I replied, nettled somewhat, "for there exists no likeness between a lad who may plot, and a goose that simply flocks with chickens to gain his food. I hold to it that we should have no association with those who traffic among the Tories."

Unfortunately, however, as we afterward came to realize, my companions over-rode my misgivings as to making him a comrade. Silas claimed that he had known the lad in fair weather and in foul, finding him true, with never a taint of Toryism, whoever his associates, and Archie declared stoutly that Seth was as loyal to the Cause as either of us. What more could I say? There were two opinions against mine, and I was not so stiff-necked as to

hold out against these lads who had as much right as I to say who should or should not be allowed to join our company, if so be we formed one. As a matter of fact, the scheme being Silas's, he was the one who had the best right to decide any vexed question, and I felt at the time that it was no more than my duty to set in the background all the suspicions which I had formed against Seth Jepson, accepting the word of these my comrades that he was a lad true to the best interests of our colony.

We had so far decided upon this company of Minute Boys as to have set down in our own minds the names of fourteen lads, including Seth Jepson, whom we believed would be glad of an opportunity to join us, and it was agreed, by the time we were come to the end of the land journey, that on the following day, after having asked advice of Doctor Warren and if the scheme met with his approval, to raise a company of Minute Boys, calling upon those whom we had selected.

Then we were come to where the skiff had been hauled up on the shore It was long past sunset, for we had walked leisurely giving no heed to making speed because of our desire not to arrive until after night had shut down, and the gathering clouds in the heavens stood our friends, inasmuch as they would serve to hide us from the view of General Gage's men who guarded the waterways. As a matter of fact, now was the moment above all others when we stood in danger, and I was more than willing to fancy the peril greater than it really was, to the end that the work we had performed might seem to be of some importance.

However, despite all my desire to make the service rendered appear perilous, I did not neglect any

precautions for our safety, although I must confess to having been somewhat disappointed when, about midnight, we pulled in under the tumble-down wharf without having so much as seen the glint of a lobster back's belt buckle.

There is little need to say with what warmth mother welcomed me, after much pounding on the door I succeeded in making her understand that I was come home.

I fear that at the time I gave but slight heed to her loving words because of being so weary that it seemed almost impossible to keep my eyes open while standing, and tumbling, rather than laying down, upon the bed, I was soon gone into the land of dreams. Until eight of the clock I slept as only a tired boy can, and would not then have wakened but for the fact that Archie and Silas were standing by my bedside, both doing their best to arouse me into wakefulness.

I understood without being told that they were come to accompany me to Master Warren's house so we might deliver the reply to the message sent to Colonel Barrett, and promising my mother that I would speedily come back to breakfast, I hurried away with the lads, wondering how it was I could have slept so long when such an important question was to be settled; for, if you remember, we had agreed to leave the matter of raising a company of Minute Boys to Doctor Warren himself.

If at the home of Samuel Hadley we were treated with scant courtesy, and if Colonel Barrett had seemed to believe that which we had done was nothing remarkable when performed by three lusty lads, we surely had no reason to complain when we met the doctor, for on the instant we presented our-

selves before him he exclaimed in surprise that we had been able to return so speedily. It almost seemed as if he never would have done with praising us for our industry in behalf of the Cause.

"It turned out a simple matter, which anyone might have worked out," I said, striving to belittle our work even when believing it should be praised. "We had no opportunity of coming to grief on the way, however careless might have been our movements, for, except at the outset, when the guard-boat passed just as we were getting under way, we have met none who appeared friendly to the king."

"I shall remember the service rendered, and it may be that sometime in the future I can repay you," the doctor said with one of his kindly smiles which always went deep into my heart when bestowed upon me.

"You may repay us now in full, if it so pleases you," Archie made bold to say.

"In what way, young master?"

'By deciding whether or no ten or twenty lads of this city by binding themselves together under, perhaps, the high-sounding name of Minute Boys, could be of service to the Cause?"

"And why might they not be of service?" the doctor asked quickly. "Think you that if such a company was enrolled, composed of boys who were to be trusted in every way, they could not do much in aid of the Cause? Even though called upon to perform only such work as you have just finished, they would be of valuable assistance, for now when Boston is in the hands of the enemy, and, as I hope, may soon be besieged by our friends, lads could come and go where men would be unable to move without exciting suspicion."

"Then you would advise that we raise a company?" I asked eagerly, and he replied "yes," so emphatically that there could be no doubt as to his approval.

"And think you it would sound simple to call ourselves Minute Boys?"

"By no means, lads, for that is what you count on being, and I venture to predict that in the days to come, when you are men grown old, such a title will bring to your hearts more of pride than any which could be bestowed by a king. The time is not far distant when this colony shall be freed from British rule, and all those who have had a part in the work may well give thanks because God allowed them such abundant opportunity of serving their country."

Now after that think you we loitered in the work of enrolling the Minute Boys? So eager were we to set about it that I believe we left the kindly doctor with but scant ceremony, running into the open air like so many sheep set free.

Chance, or some evil fortune, decreed that the first lad we should meet after having left Master Warren's house, was that same Seth Jepson whom I was opposed to counting as a comrade, and Silas, eager to gain the first recruit for our company of Minute Boys, hailed him in a friendly fashion.

"Should we not wait until deciding more fully whether it will be well to let him come among us?" I asked, hoping even then that it might be possible to shut him out; but Archie said with somewhat of impatience:

"If we are to quibble over the name of each fellow who is likely to join our company, and strive to find in him ever so slight a leaning toward the king,

then we may as well give over the effort at once, for certain it is we haven't enough time to raise recruits in such manner."

What could I have said after such a remark, which savored more of irritation than I am able to make appear by words? Even though I had had proof that Seth Jepson was not the kind of a lad we should take on as comrade, that which Archie said would have silenced me.

Silas did not wait many seconds before plunging into the business he was so eager to carry out, and in a twinkling Seth knew as much about the scheme as did we who had hatched it. Search his face with my eyes as I might, it was impossible to tell by any expression there whether the plan seemed to him good or ill; but when Silas was come to an end of his brief explanation the lad said, as if asking a question:

"And would you enroll me among your Minute Boys?"

"Ay, else why should I spend my breath in recounting the plan," Silas cried impatiently. "Are you of the mind to join us, or is it more to your liking to follow Amos Nelson and act as lickspittle to any lobster back you chance to come upon?"

"I have never done so yet," Seth replied, and I waited in vain to hear him declare that his greatest desire was the success of the colonies in the coming struggle. "In case I set myself down as a member of your company, what may be expected of me?"

Now according to my belief, a lad of Boston town who had such a proposition made to him should, if he had been of the right metal, have jumped at it eagerly instead of waiting to learn

whether he would have much or little work to perform, and I looked meaningly at Archie, believing he would detect in this hesitation of Seth's, as I did, a leaning toward Toryism; but he, thinking only of enrolling a sufficient number of names to make our company of decent size, apparently gave no heed to that which caused me so much of uneasiness.

Silas was at a loss to answer the question asked by Seth, for we had not gone so far in our speculations as to say what our duties might be before we could, and with truth, call ourselves Minute Boys; but finally he made reply stammeringly:

"You will be expected to do whatsoever you may in behalf of the Cause. Now we three lads have ourselves been sent to Lexington by Doctor Warren to carry a message, and most likely similar work will fall to the share of the Minute Boys."

"You have just come from Lexington?" Seth cried, looking up sharply, and even Silas must have understood that he had been indiscreet, to say the least, in thus divulging what should have been kept a secret.

"I only spoke of that to show you what the Minute Boys may be called upon to do. As a matter of course, we will be under the command of others, and bound to set our hands to whatsoever work is found for us."

Seth did not appear very eager to take advantage of this opportunity to serve the colony. He stood there as if chewing it over in his mind until I said with somewhat of impatience, and no little hope that he might finally refuse:

"If the idea does not seem good to you there is no reason why you may not refuse to join us. We

want only those lads who are eager to aid the Cause in so far as in them lies."

"I was only asking myself whether you might depend upon me to answer any call promptly, for my parents do not leave me as free as are some of you. However, I think you can reckon it a bargain, and I will do my best to obey orders."

"We are to have a meeting to-night at the old ship-yard, near to Luke Wright's home," Archie said, evidently thinking we had spent too much time over the gaining of this one recruit, and as we hurried away Seth cried, in what sounded to me like an odd tone:

"Don't fear but that I will be there."

I was so irritated because Seth had become our first recruit, and owing to the fact that Silas had publicly spoken of our journey to Lexington, that I could make no comment on what had been done, and as we walked on with our faces set toward my home, where I counted on breaking fast, Archie said laughingly:

"You are disgruntled because we chanced to run upon Seth."

"Whether I am or no makes little difference now, since he has agreed to join us," I replied, and the lad, to win me out of what was very like a sulky mood, continued:

"I am certain you wrong Seth, and you yourself can only give as a reason for suspecting him that he has often been seen with Tory lads. Now it is in my mind that if you and I had as our neighbors half a dozen of those foolish boys who had rather serve the king than the colony, we would often be seen in their company."

"There is no good reason why we should discuss

the matter now that the mischief, if any comes of it, has been done," I replied, and then eager to be alone for the moment, suggested that I go home for something to eat, meeting my comrades an hour later near the city dock.

To this Silas agreed quickly, for he was eager to continue the work of gaining recruits, and had no stomach for idling the time away at my home.

Therefore it was that we three parted company, and when at somewhere near the time agreed upon I went to the rendezvous, neither Silas nor Archie were to be seen.

Their absence gave me no uneasiness, for it was possible to guess exactly why they had not come, and I loitered idly about, watching now a squad of General Gage's lobster backs as they marched upon some duty which was likely to be unpleasant to those who loved the Cause, and again listening to snatches of conversation when two or three whom I knew to be Tories passed in earnest converse. Without being able to give any reason, I became impressed, as while returning from Master Hadley's home, with the idea that something of moment was on foot — something of which I remained in ignorance,— and that it was important such as Doctor Warren should know of my suspicions.

It was not until the day had grown near to noon that I saw either of my comrades, and then it was Archie who came up, looking thoroughly well pleased as he said in a tone of triumph:

"What think you, Luke Wright, of our having enrolled fourteen lads as Minute Boys, and without having spent half a day at the task?"

Archie gave me the names, and, except in the

case of the first recruit, I could find no fault with any.

Then the lad set about telling me how he and Silas had accomplished the work, making of it so long a story, and with so much of detail, that I gave little heed to anything he said, until from the opposite side of the dock that Tory cur, Amos Nelson, shouted in a tone of derision, speaking to one of his kindred spirits who was yet quite a distance away:

"There are two who count on raising a mob of rebels to drive the king's soldiers from Boston!"

CHAPTER III

THE WAR BEGUN

THERE could be no question, after this cry from Amos Nelson, but that he and his Tory friends had in some way come to learn of what we lads would do toward aiding the Cause.

It was natural that I, suspecting Seth Jepson, should set down to his door the crime of having betrayed us to our enemies; but when I put that thought into words Archie would have none of it. He declared that however much Seth might be inclined toward Toryism, he was not such a knave as to join us with traitorous intentions in his heart.

We had made no reply to Amos Nelson, and it appeared much as if his only desire was to let us understand that he was in possession of our secret, for immediately after having taunted us he went off in the direction of Corn hill, taking his friend with him, therefore Archie and I had nothing to do except discuss the possibility of our having been betrayed, with not a little warmth but no result.

Silas was still engaged in the work of enrolling recruits, and failed to come to the rendezvous, most like believing he could be doing better service in seeking out those who would become Minute Boys, than by wagging his tongue at the city dock with us.

Because of knowing that that which we would keep private was a secret no longer, I grew dis-

heartened, and instead of agreeing to Archie's proposition that the remainder of the day be spent in gaining yet more recruits, I turned my face homeward once more, agreeing crustily to meet those who had promised to become Minute Boys at the old ship-yard that evening.

A blind man might have seen that Archie was not well pleased with my sudden lukewarmness in the matter of raising a company. He believed he knew there had been no betrayal by Seth, and therefore set down my behavior to ill nature, rather than disappointment because the plan had gone awry even before it was well begun.

During the remainder of the day I kept closely housed, doing whatsoever came to hand in the way of helping my mother, therefore it was, perhaps, that I failed of hearing much which might have startled, and even frightened me.

When the night was come I went according to agreement to the ship-yard, and there found assembled those whom Archie and Silas had enrolled. A goodly company it was, for all told we numbered sixteen, and surely if that many lads, eager to do whatsoever they might in aid of the Cause, could be found in Boston town within twelve hours, the time must be near at hand when we could boast of sufficient recruits to make a showing before our elders.

Seth Jepson was among the number, and I must confess at being surprised. So firmly did I believe him to be the one who had betrayed us, that I fancied the fellow would not dare show his head, yet there he was with no token of guilt, so far as I could see, but appearing to be on most friendly terms with every one.

He was so outspoken in behalf of the Minute Boys; so confident they might in time to come make for themselves an enviable name, that my belief in his treachery was almost shaken for the moment.

Then came that which I least expected. It had been decided that we would have two officers, one a captain, and the other a lieutenant. Archie Hemming spoke up boldly, declaring that I was his choice as leader; but before it was possible for me to make any protest, the others had backed him up with so many noisy words that the matter was settled without my permission, and decidedly against my inclination. It was Archie who should have been the commander of the Minute Boys, because his head was clearer than mine. He was more ready of wit; but when I would have said as much to my comrades, Silas shut me off with a sharp turn, declaring laughingly that Archie should be the lieutenant, and thus hold a position where he could counter-balance all my shortcomings.

This also was decided in a twinkling, and thus was our company of Minute Boys officered despite the better judgment of him who had been selected as captain.

There was much to discuss on this first night of meeting if we were to become, as we claimed, a company of soldiers. Plans should be laid concerning how we best might set about making ourselves recognized by the Sons of Liberty, or by the officers of the militia. Then we had to decide upon some regular rendezvous, where at the first summons we might all assemble, and this last we agreed should be where we then were, at the old ship-yard, on the tumble-down dock beneath which my skiff was hidden.

Every fellow had some plan to suggest which would work to the benefit of our company, and while nothing was actually decided upon save the place where we should meet at the first summons, the time passed so rapidly that it was midnight before the last of us had freed his mind. Then, as a matter of course, we scurried home, going singly or in couples that we might the better evade the red-coated watch, which patrolled every street, and fearful lest we be chided by our parents, even though we called ourselves by the high sounding name of "Minute Boys," for having remained out so late.

Thus it was that we lads, who prided ourselves on being keenly on the alert for any movement of the lobster backs, and much the same as imprisoned in our own city where it all happened, failed of knowing that shortly before the meeting of the Minute Boys was broken up, eight hundred of the king's men were embarked in boats at the Common, bound, as we afterward knew, and as many of our elders were then aware, for Lexington and Concord.

Before night-fall of the next day the Minute Boys of Boston assembled at the rendezvous without having been summoned, for word had been brought into town of the bloody work at Lexington and Concord, and we lads, who counted on taking such active part in the struggle against the king, had lost the first opportunity of showing what it might be possible for us to do.

Sixty-five of the king's soldiers had been killed, one hundred and eighty wounded, and twenty-eight taken prisoners; while of our people fifty-nine were killed, thirty-nine wounded, and five failed to an-

swer to the roll call, having, most like, crawled away, as do the lower animals, to die alone.

All this had been done within and around that town we had so lately visited, and yet Archie, Silas and I, who counted ourselves as being keen-witted, had failed to have the slightest inkling of what was so near at hand.

While we had been making simple plans for the future, loitering in Boston when we might have been of service elsewhere, our people were being shot down by the lobster backs, and as these thoughts came into my mind I felt as if I had committed some grievous sin in laying up against Samuel Hadley the charge of being inhospitable, for he was among the first to yield his life in behalf of the Cause.

Doctor Warren was there, and also my father, while most like the old woman's son, Hiram Griffin, helped to do that which proclaimed to the king our readiness to give our lives rather than submit to injustice. As I counted over those whom I knew and guessed had taken part in that battle, it seemed to me as if of all who would serve the Cause, our Minute Boys were the only ones absent.

It is needless for me to set down all the unavailing words of regret which were spoken among us that night after having heard the news, for it can readily be fancied how we reproached ourselves, and how bitter was our disappointment. In our shortsightedness and inability to realize that the work at Lexington and Concord was but the beginning of the struggle against the king, we failed to understand that we would again and again have ample opportunity of showing what it might be possible for us lads of Boston to do.

What at this day seems to me strangest, was that in our grief and vexation we failed to make any plans for future work. It was as if we had come to believe that the butchery at Lexington ended it all, and we Minute Boys would no longer be needed.

Perhaps our dullness may be accounted for by the fact that there was so much of excitement on this night and the next day, that we hardly had time to think of ourselves. Those yet remaining in Boston, who were devoted to the Cause, gathered here and there to talk over what at the same time brought us sorrow and rejoicing — sorrow that so many of our people had been slaughtered, and rejoicing that the struggle against British misrule had finally begun.

The Tories made a big show of themselves, taking good care to appear in public and boast that this first lesson was but the beginning of a series which the king would teach us. They talked so loudly and gave themselves so wholly over to rejoicing that one would have believed a great victory had been won, whereas, as a matter of fact, our people, all unused to the art of war and but poorly armed, had, as it were, sent the king's trained men home like whipped curs.

If the battle of Lexington was a victory for the lobster backs, then of a verity when the king's men had won a dozen of a similar kind, we of the colony were come off conquerors.

Archie's father was at home during the battle, but on the evening of that day he was summoned to Cambridge, where, so it was stated, our people were gathering in great numbers. His last command to my comrade, and also advice to others of the company who called themselves Minute Boys, was that in

he and we remain under cover as much as possible during the next three or four days, for it was reasonable to suppose the Britishers would be more severe in their rule than they had been; that only the slightest provocation would be needed to lodge in jail those who favored the Cause.

It was not in my mind that we lads would be allowed to go to Cambridge where an army was gathering under the command of the Committee of Safety, until we had in some way proven ourselves, and therefore, much to my disappointment, I had made up my mind that by not having been in Lexington at the time of the battle we had lost all opportunity for taking part in active work.

Luckily, however, I had sufficient sense to give warning that all those who had been enrolled as Minute Boys should stay near to their own homes until it might be possible to know what our people intended to do, and at the same time hold themselves in readiness for any summons which might come.

It was on the second night after the Lexington butchery that Archie came to my home, having the permission of his mother to sleep with me. We had been earnestly trying to hit upon some way of showing what could be done by lads such as us, and this visit of his to my home was planned that we might have more time in which to discuss matters.

From noon until perhaps three hours after we had gone to bed, we lads talked, suggesting one scheme after another only to discard each as being impossible of execution, when there came a summons at the outer door which brought both of us to our feet trembling with apprehension, although I could not have said why.

Visitors did not often come at such a time, and there were so few among our neighbors friendly to the Cause, who yet remained in Boston town, that it did not seem probable any of them would be abroad so late while the Tories were given over to rejoicing because of what had been done at Lexington.

I could hear my mother as she went to the barred door and asked as to who might be there, after which came the answer, so distinct that I could catch every word:

"I would see Luke Wright, having a message from his father."

"And who may you be?" mother asked.

"Hiram Griffin," came the reply.

"It is the son of the old woman who fed us when we were hungry," I cried joyfully to Archie as I ran down the stairs, taking three or four steps at a bound, for I knew this Hiram Griffin had been loitering in Cambridge until he might be of service to the Cause, and his coming could not betoken ill for me or mine.

As soon as might be I unbarred the door, while my mother was striving with trembling fingers to get a flame to the candle, and then there entered a young fellow who could hardly have been one and twenty, stout of frame, with a face betokening rarest good nature, but yet at the same time giving one to believe that he might be dull and heavy in his movements.

"Where did you come from?" I asked, forgetting that it was my duty, in the absence of my father, to welcome this visitor.

"I am from Cambridge where our people are gathering as flies gather around molasses, so that in

time we may have men enough to meet all the forces General Gage can send against us."

"How did you get here?"

"Partly by walking, partly by pulling in a skiff, and partly by swimming, for one of his majesty's guard-boats ran me down half a mile or more from the shore, and had I not played the muskrat, being able to stay under water as long as that animal, I had been in the city jail by this time."

Now it was I saw his clothes were sodden; the water which dripped from every fold of his garments made a puddle upon the floor, whereat I quickened the embers on the hearth into a blaze that he might dry himself, and, understanding what I would do, this Hiram Griffin said with a laugh:

"A little more or less of water won't do me any harm, and I can well afford to take the wetting because of shutting the eyes of the lobster backs so finely. They counted that I must have drowned, since one of the lubbers aimed a blow at my head and shattered the gunwale of the boat. Most like he thought my skull was stove in, and consequently they did not spend much time looking for a dead man that was believed to be at the bottom of the harbor."

"But you came with a message," Archie interrupted as he descended the stairs, looking curiously at the stranger.

"Ay, and won't be long in the giving of it, seeing as it's no written word. Your father, if so be your name is Luke Wright," he added turning to me, "would have you and a lad named Archie Hemming come to Cambridge as soon as may be."

"But what for?" Archie asked sharply, and

Griffin, looking at him in surprise because he thus interrupted the conversation, said curtly:

"It was not for me to ask why Luke was wanted. My part was to bring the message, if so be I could get into this town, and I allow General Gage would need more lobster backs than he has now to keep me out if once I was set on entering."

"When are we to start?" Archie asked again, and Griffin cried:

"And who may you be, young sir?"

"I am Archie Hemming."

"Oho! so it seems I have killed my two birds with one stone, eh? Well, that may turn out luckily, for I am little acquainted with the streets of Boston, and was counting on having somewhat of trouble to find your home."

"How did you know where we lived?" I asked.

"Your father put it in words so plainly that I could not have missed my aim after once coming upon the ship-yard. Now if you have done with questioning, suppose we set off?"

"Do you mean that the lads are to go to Cambridge at once?" my mother asked in mingled surprise and anxiety, whereupon Hiram Griffin said with a clumsy bow:

"Those were the orders. Master Wright claimed that it would not be safe for us to make any try at leaving Boston save at night, and unless we set off at once four and twenty hours will be wasted just when time is most precious."

It can well be imagined that I was in the highest state of excitement at thus being summoned to where the friends of the Cause were gathering to continue the rebellion against the king which had

been begun at Lexington. It seemed that although our Minute Boys had failed to take advantage of their first opportunity, it might yet be possible to do something which would bring them among those who were devoting themselves to the colony.

"You are to understand that the lobster backs wrecked my boat, therefore another will be needed, unless you count on leaving town by way of the Neck," Hiram said while Archie and I were hurriedly dressing, and then, if never before, did I bless the inclination to buy, a short twelve months since, out of my slender purse, the skiff which was hidden under the dock at the ship-yard.

"We have all we may need in that line," Archie said cheerily, and I could well understand how glad was his heart because this summons had come to us. "But for that which was done at Lexington, Luke Wright and I would have sought you in Cambridge long ere this."

"Sought me?" Griffin repeated in perplexity.

"Ay, so we promised your mother," Archie replied, and then he went on to tell of our halt on the road from Master Hadley's, and when he was done Hiram said fervently:

"God bless her, her heart was ever as large as that of an ox, and she could no more see man or boy pass by hungry without trying to make amends for it, than she could fly. Some day, please God, the three of us will go to the home which isn't much to look at; but no lad ever had a better one so far as a mother's love and care counts."

It seemed as if the visitor was recalled by this outburst of devotion, to his immediate duty, for on the instant he changed his tune by crying gruffly:

"Are we to stand here until the sun is so near to rising that we will find it a ticklish job to slip by the guard-boats?"

"Archie and I have never had any trouble in leaving Boston, or of coming into it when we were so minded, and we will set you on the road to Cambridge without turning a hair."

"I am told that the lobster backs are keeping sharper watch since Lexington, than ever before, and for a certainty around this end of the town the guard-boats are as thick as fleas on a dog, therefore I'm thinking it is best we set off before the night gets old."

By this time both Archie and I were ready; that is, we were fully clothed, and since the journey, in case it was not interrupted, would be short, there were no further preparations to be made, except that we first go to warn my comrade's mother of his intended departure.

I proposed that Hiram Griffin should remain at my home until we were done with this part of the business; but he, having found us so readily, was not willing we should give him the slip even for a moment, and therefore it was we doubled the danger of being brought to an accounting by the patrol, in taking him across to Hull street.

All might have gone well if we had contented ourselves with this much, leaving to my mother and Archie's the task of notifying the other Minute Boys of our whereabouts; but I must needs attend to more than was necessary, thinking my position as captain demanded it, and after leaving Hull street, instead of embarking without delay as we should have done, I insisted that we pay a visit to Silas Brown-

rigg's for the purpose of explaining to him what ought to be done with the company during our absence.

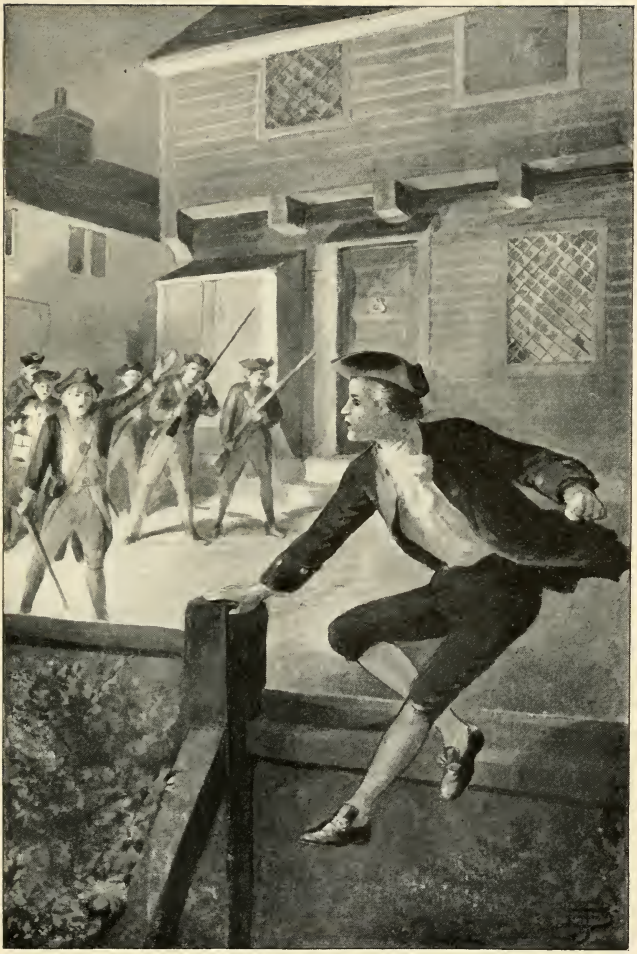
Now up to this time we had been so fortunate as not to have come in contact with the patrol or any straggling lobster back, and it would have been possible, had we gone directly there, for us to have gained the ship-yard unobserved.

Hiram Griffin grumbled not a little because I deemed it necessary to pay so many visits, but, unfortunately, I gave no heed to his words, being speedily brought to repent of my heedlessness, for no sooner did we turn the corner into Salem street than we came upon two of the watch, and with them a squad of six lobster backs.

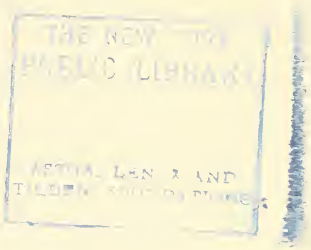
Now, as of course you know, we had no lawful right to be abroad in the streets at that hour without a pass; but it would have been useless for us who called ourselves rebels to have applied for any such permission to wander about for, as a rule, none save Tories were so favored. Since General Gage had begun to hold us the same as prisoners, I and all my friends had taken the chances of venturing out even after nine of the clock, and because thus far we had not gotten ourselves into trouble, I was grown bolder than a prudent lad should have been.

When we came upon the watch, reinforced by the lobster backs, however, I realized on the instant how dangerous was the situation. Without passes, and known to be sons of those who favored the Cause, there was no question but what we would be committed to prison, and at some time, meaning when Governor Gage or his understrappers saw fit, brought up for examination.

Therefore it was that my thoughts turned to



"I LEAPED THE FENCE."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flight, and stepping back a pace to check Hiram Griffin's advance, I whispered hurriedly:

"Get over to the ship-yard and hide under the old wharf!"

However dull and heavy Hiram may have appeared, he surely was quick-witted, needing not a kick to emphasize a hint, for the words were no sooner out of my mouth than he was off like a deer, taking the precaution to run in a zig-zag course lest the lobster backs should send a shower of bullets after him.

I followed his example, so far as taking refuge in flight was concerned; but instead of continuing on by the street, I leaped the fence of Parson Reed's yard, making my way across his garden with but little heed to the damage that might be done the young plants.

On the instant came shouts from the watch and from the soldiers for us to halt, and a few seconds later the crackle of musketry telling that they had opened fire, most like on Hiram Griffin, for by this time I was well hidden from view.

I listened with painful intentness for a cry from Hiram which would betoken that one of the British bullets had found its billet, because he would be like to cry out in case of being wounded.

Happily no such dismal warning came to my ears, and believing I was safe from pursuit because of knowing my way through the gardens hereabout, and having close at hand many a safe hiding place, I asked myself for the first time what might have been Archie's fate.

I had not seen the lad escaping; he was two or three paces in advance of me when we turned the corner, and the chances were that the poor fellow

had been made prisoner before having had time to realize the danger which we had come upon so suddenly. While one might have counted ten I stood irresolute, wondering whether it was not my duty to learn his fate even at the expense of being captured, in order that I might do something toward aiding him; but then I come to understand that such a course would be sheer folly. I could do nothing toward effecting his release, and it seemed necessary, at whatever hazard, that I make my way to Cambridge according to orders.

Yet even when I would have continued the flight came the thought that it was cowardly to thus desert a comrade; that as captain of the Minute Boys duty demanded that I stand by every member of the company, however great their peril, yet of what avail would it be?

Even while these thoughts were in my mind I was running as does the hare when the dogs are close on his scent, and at the same time that I reproached myself I strained every effort to gain the goal, which was the ship-yard, where I believed Hiram Griffin would sooner or later make his way.

Behind me I could still hear the cries of the watch and the crackle of musketry as the lobster backs fired at random, for it was not possible that Hiram yet remained in view, and with this noise were mingled the shouts of citizens who had been wakened from their slumbers, until there was a perfect bedlam at that corner of Hull and Salem streets.

To my relief I came to understand that the noise grew fainter and fainter as I advanced, and, therefore, was it certain that the Britishers were not on my trail; but with such pleasing knowledge came the thought that Hiram might have been shot down, or,

failing to continue a true course, was doubling here and there with the pursuers close upon his heels.

I ran as never before, straining every nerve and muscle in the race as one will when he knows that a prison awaits him if he be overtaken, and it was well the road was no longer, for when finally I dashed in under the broken timbers of the old wharf my breath was coming so short and thick that I question if I had been able to advance twenty paces further. I was hidden from view, but had any come in search of me they must have heard my heavy breathing, or the beating of my heart, which was thumping like a trip-hammer.

Lying upon the wet mud and seaweed, for the tide was luckily at about half-ebb, I strove desperately to regain my breath and my strength so that I might have both at command if by some chance the lobster backs got an inkling of my whereabouts.

How long I remained there it is impossible to say, for at such times a minute seems a whole hour. I only know that I had recovered in a great measure from the fatigue of the race when there came to my ears the sound of footsteps approaching the hiding place, and in a twinkling I was on my knees ready to spring out in either direction if the red-coated pursuer showed himself, for at that time I had no doubt but what he who thus advanced was in search of me. You see I had for the instant almost the same as forgotten that Hiram Griffin, if not a prisoner, or Archie, if by some lucky chance he had escaped, would strive to meet me at that place.

During the merest fraction of time I gave myself up to fear, and then, my mind clearing and common

sense returning, I crept softly out, still keeping within the shadow of the timbers, until I could see against the sky the form of him who was coming toward the hiding place.

One glance was sufficient to show that it was Hiram Griffin, and even then when my mind was in such a whirl, I said to myself that he must be a keen lad who could find his way thus deftly across a strange town.

Standing up that he might see me and know in what direction to advance, I held out both hands, welcoming him when he was come near, as we welcome those who have literally escaped from the jaws of death.

"I'm thinking that we best not do much in the way of tongue wagging while standing here in the open," he said, speaking with difficulty because of his heavy breathing, and straightway I led him under the timbers where I had been hiding, asking meanwhile how he had succeeded in getting away from the red coats.

"It was only a case of using my legs," he cried grimly. "When a fellow knows that he is being chased by bullets he is able to move right fast. If you had skipped that last visit, thinking more of duty to those who sent me than to your comrades in the company of Minute Boys, we had gotten off without turning a hair."

"Ay, it is my fault and mine only that Archie has been made prisoner," I cried bitterly, and Hiram asked in surprise, for until this moment he believed the lad to be with me:

"Has he been taken?"

"It must be so, since he has not come up. He

most like ran into the very arms of the watch before realizing the danger," I replied.

"Well, here's a pretty kettle of fish," and Hiram spoke much as if the capture of Archie would be fatal to all the plans of those who had sent him.

"Think you we should go back and try to find the lad?" I asked helplessly, and he cried as if in anger:

"To what end? Have you an idea that two might take him by force from such a gang as made him prisoner?"

"We could at least go to prison with him, and not have it said we deserted a comrade."

"Lad," Hiram began, laying his hand impressively on my arm, "before this 'ere squabble with the king has come to an end there will be many a good lad clapped into prison, and many another sent into the next world by means of British bullets. If we of the colonies count on gaining our freedom we must not let the life or liberty of one person stand in our way, however dear to our hearts that one may be."

"Then you believe we should leave the poor lad to his fate?" I asked.

"Ay, what else can be done? I came for two lads, and if so be it is possible I will carry back at least one with me. In case that can't be accomplished, I'll do my best to save my own skin in order to make report. Where's your skiff?"

"Just yonder," and I pointed to a dark mass twenty feet or more away.

"'Tis time we were setting off, for no one can say how much more of danger we may strike before crossing the water."

Hiram was making of what seemed to me a most exciting adventure, nothing more than business, and his matter-of-fact way of looking at the situation did more toward bringing me to my senses than any line of argument he could have used.

I ran to the skiff, and when we had dragged her down the shore until she was waterborne, both of us stopped as with one accord to listen lest an enemy might have been creeping up on us.

Nothing came to our ears save the splash of oars in the distance nearby where the king's ships were at anchor, and a distant hum as of people moving about in the town a long way off.

"I reckon this is as good a time as we'll find for making the start," Hiram said as he clambered into the skiff. "I don't count myself as much of a sailor, and therefore you will have to take a hand in this until we have landed somewhere near to Willis creek, which is our best course on the road to Cambridge."

"Why not go by Cambridge river?" I asked, eager to save myself a long tramp on land.

"If you are willing to take the risk, I'm agreed; but it strikes me that if the guard-boats are very thick hereabouts we'll have a better show of getting off scot free by going up the creek, than if we sailed entirely around the town, as we must in order to gain the river."

There was some good sense in what he said, which I understood even before he ceased speaking, and I made reply while pushing the skiff out from amid the rotten timbers:

"It would seem as if you were sailor enough to understand what dangers lie in our course, and perhaps I had best give over the command to you, for

verily I showed myself a simple by thinking it possible to go by the river."

"I have been around Cambridge a few days, an' seein's how there was a chance my mother's son might get himself into a scrape while these 'ere Britishers are so careless with their guns, I made it my business to pick up a pretty good idee of the situation," Hiram said with a chuckle of mirth at his own precautions. "I figured quite a spell ago that if a man wanted to get across to the other shore, he'd best make the water part of the journey as short as might be."

By this time we were well out from beneath the wharf. I had taken up the oars, since there was not wind enough to fill the sail, and was counting on stretching across from Hudson's point to Charlestown, when Hiram whispered softly:

"Turn about lad; head exactly opposite to where you count on going, for yonder, coming this way if I'm not mistaken, is a craft of some kind."

Fortunately I acted on his suggestion without delaying to ask the reason for such a move, and it was well that I did, since we were no sooner headed toward Noddle island than I could make out, even in the gloom, a boat filled with men which seemingly had come from the direction of the water mill.

It is needless to say that I put every ounce of strength on the oars; but in the other craft there were no less than four men pulling vigorously, and our chances of escaping unobserved would have been slight indeed had not Hiram lent his aid.

Seizing the second pair of oars he swung himself around on the after thwart, and although he made no claim to being a sailor, I never saw one

who worked to better advantage. It seemed as if he had the strength of a dozen men in his arms, and the skiff shot forward into the gloom as if hardly touching the water, until we were come so near the shore of Noddle island as to be in the denser shadows, where we could afford to wait until learning what course our pursuers might be taking.

I was not able to distinguish objects clearly because of the gloom, yet I fancied it was possible to make out that a certain number of the eight or ten men occupying the oncoming boat were armed — they surely had the bearing of soldiers, and I said to myself, that suspecting Hiram and I might take to the water, they were come in search of us.

The same thought was evidently in my companion's mind, for he turned his head to whisper ever so softly:

"I'm thinking we had best make a landing near here, where we can haul the skiff out of the water, for yonder crew will make a close search if I am not mistaken."

There was a chance that by circling the shore of Noddle island until we were come off Morton's point, it might be possible to give these fellows the slip; but then we would be a long distance from our destination, in addition to running the risk of being captured, and it seemed to me I was warranted in acting upon Hiram's suggestion.

We worked the oars softly, as can well be imagined, and having come to the land went waist-deep into the water lest the grounding of the skiff's bow upon the sand might be heard.

It was no great task to lift the small craft so that she could be carried without scraping against the rocks, and we lugged her into a clump of

bushes which grew near the water's edge, where so well was she hidden that she could not have been seen even in the daylight, after which we set ourselves to listen in order to gain some idea of what those in the other boat might be doing.

Before half an hour had passed there was no longer any doubt in my mind but that they were in search of us, having a pretty good idea, from the direction of our flight, that we were bent on gaining the water-front, and also, most like, that we could not pass Hudson's point without being seen by them.

The boat was pulled to and fro between the island and the ship-yard as if they were standing guard, and when she had set across, mayhap, three or four times, Hiram asked of me in a whisper:

"Think you your comrade might have told them what we would try to do?"

"Of course not!" I replied with somewhat of anger in my tone that he should suspect Archie of any such vileness. "The lad is true to his friends, and would never betray them no matter how much silence might cost him."

"Then it looks as if some one had got an amazingly good idee of what we would do, and from what part of the town we'd set off," Hiram said thoughtfully. "Those fellows couldn't have set about their work better if we'd told them in advance that we'd leave the ship-yard and try to go to Cambridge."

Like a flash came into my mind the thought that Seth Jepson might have succeeded in doing us this mischief, if mischief had really been done; but I dismissed it on the instant, saying to myself that surely the lad could not have known what we were likely

to do, even were it probable he had had opportunity of speaking to those we had stumbled against.

"It is neither more nor less than blind chance," I said in reply to my companion's words. "Because we headed for the ship-yard they supposed we had a boat nearby, and because our people were gathering at Cambridge they would naturally say it was our purpose to go there."

"Whichever way you put it, it's going to be mighty tough on us, for unless those fellows get tired of pulling that heavy boat 'twixt now and sunrise, we are like to be held here until to-morrow night."

CHAPTER IV

THE PRISONER

WHETHER it was that those who were the same as holding us prisoners on the island had an inkling we were somewhere in the vicinity, or if it was by pure chance that they happened to patrol that particular part of the harbor just then, I am unable to say; but certain it was that they remained continually on the move throughout the entire night, never going so far away that we had half an opportunity of slipping out unobserved, and now and then coming so near that it was possible for us to hear their conversation.

As the moments passed and it became almost certain we must remain in hiding during the coming day, I fell into a perfect fever of impatience. Now blaming myself most bitterly for having attempted to warn Silas of what we were to do, and again saying that I was showing myself a coward by thus leaving Archie to his fate, although what I might have done just then in his behalf I could not have said.

As a matter of course we had brought with us neither food nor water, thinking the voyage to Cambridge would be accomplished in a few hours at the most, and therefore it was that Hiram and I faced hunger and thirst, knowing that both must be endured by us before the sun had set again.

"It's a case of bearing whatever comes, and

looking pleasant," my companion said when the grey light of a new day appeared in the eastern sky. "I allow that the hours will seem precious long before we dare poke our noses out of this clump of bushes again, but what can't be cured must be endured, and seein's how we haven't had any sleep, I'm proposing to bottle up as much as I may while those blooming lobster backs hold us here like rats in a trap."

Having said this Hiram looked about for a level place in which to stretch out at full length; but failing to find it he curled himself up as if trying to hug the twigs, and almost immediately appeared to fall into profound slumber.

I was so uncomfortable in mind that it would not be possible for me to settle down to sleep however much I might need repose. We were not so well hidden from view but what in the broad glare of day any who chanced to pass near at hand might see us, and although unarmed and therefore unable to make any defence, it seemed absolutely necessary one of us should remain on watch.

When the day had fully dawned it was possible for me to see the guard-boats which had been on duty all night, pulling here and there like spiders which have been disappointed in their prey; but until about an hour after sunrise there were no small boats 'twixt Noddle island and the town. However, a dozen or more could be seen going from one to another of the king's ships, for the *Lively,* the *Somerset* and the *Falcon* were anchored off the shore, stretching from the South to the North battery.

At one time I was on the point of awakening Hi-

ram and proposing that he and I make the venture of rowing up the coast of the island till opposite Morton's point, and from there to the Penny ferry; but I stayed my hand even while it was outstretched to seize his arm, realizing that I was not warranted in taking the chance for two very good and sufficient reasons. The first, that it was necessary I obey the summons to present myself at Cambridge, and again, that I must preserve my liberty if I would do anything toward aiding the dear lad whom I doubted not was lodged in the prison on Queen street.

How it might be possible for me to succor him had not come to my mind, yet I believed that with all our company of Minute Boys to aid, something might be done even while he was held by the king's men, who would rather shoot him down than allow a rebel to escape from their clutches.

Then it was I began to cast about for some plan which would promise at least a shadow of success, and I had ample time before me for such effort, unless, perchance, some imquisitive lobster back or marine came upon our hiding place.

It was not possible for me to make much headway in laying plans. I worked out one in my mind only to abandon it; then another to find it was impossible of execution, and again a third which proved yet wilder than the others, until the heat of the sun, which beat down upon me in full fervor, and the low murmur of the water on the shingly beach, lulled me to drowsiness. Even while saying to myself that I must remain awake and on guard, I fell asleep, being conscious of nothing more until, without apparent cause, I opened my eyes to find

that the sun was in the western sky and Hiram sitting with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, regarding me fixedly.

"What's the matter?" I cried incautiously loud as I rose to a sitting posture?

"The matter is that we are tied here all these hours instead of being in Cambridge where, mayhap, there is plenty for us to do."

"How long have you been awake?"

"Nigh about three days, as it seems to me, though I reckon it can't be more than a couple of hours."

"Have you seen or heard anything of the Britishers?"

"As much as you may see now by looking out from among the bushes. No one has come our way, and if they had I believe I'd eaten them, for since yesterday morning no bite of food has passed my lips."

It would have been better for me if he had refrained from speaking of food, because the mere words made me hungry, and on the instant I realized, or fancied I did, that my mouth was parched with thirst. The knowledge that I could minister to neither one desire nor the other, until we were come to Cambridge, only served to make them all the more intense.

It would be worse than childish to complain when no good could come from uttering peevish words, and I strove to put from my mind all that I desired, by speaking of Archie, idly wondering where he might be.

"Unless he is snug at home, I'm allowing the Britishers have got him penned up in such shape that neither you nor I can do much toward aiding

him," Hiram said emphatically, and then to my distress of mind he set about telling of an acquaintance of his who had had the ill fortune to displease some of General Gage's following, thereby bringing himself to a sojourn in Boston prison.

After that we talked of this thing and of another, it makes little difference what, I meanwhile watching the sun until my eyes ran water, coming to believe now and then it was standing still in the heavens, so slowly did it move.

Finally, however, the night came, as all nights will while we remain in this world, whether they be for our good or for our evil. The shadows had hardly more than begun to gather when Hiram, shaking himself as does a dog, said in a business-like tone:

"I'm allowing, lad, that we can't start any too soon. The guard-boats will be out as thick as flies around a molasses jug within the next half hour, and even though there's a chance of being seen, by skirting along the shore of this island we have reason to believe it'll be possible to keep out of sight. According to my way of thinking the risk will be less now, than if we waited for the lobster backs to begin their night's work."

As Hiram suggested so we did, working rapidly in launching the skiff, and when she was waterborne we pulled as fellows will who believe death is pursuing them, meanwhile realizing keenly that once chase should be made we could not hope to escape.

Fortune favored us this time, however scurvy a trick she had played the night before, and we gained Morton's point on the Charlestown shore without apparently having been seen by friend or foe.

Night had so nearly shut in now that we were

hidden by the gloom, and had every reason to believe we were come out from amid our enemies without other harm than suffering with hunger and thirst.

If Archie had been with me, I could have cried aloud with joy as we aimed a straight course for the Penny ferry.

There is no need that I go into details of that tramp from the Medford river to Cambridge, nor for me to set down all which was said between us. It is enough if I write that we were come in the early morning to where were gathered those brave hearts who counted on making a great army which was to be raised against the king, and in defence of the colonies.

Already had the place begun to look like a military encampment, except that instead of glistening white canvas tents such as the king's men had, our people were housed as best they might be in shelters of brush, tents formed of blankets, and even many with nothing 'twixt their illy-clad bodies and God's sky.

Hiram, who appeared to be thoroughly familiar with this poor imitation of an encampment, passed rapidly along until we were come to a building in front of which stood a man without a uniform, but with a musket over his shoulder, who was acting as sentinel.

There were no military salutes exchanged between my companion and this man on duty; but they greeted each other as old friends, the sentinel saying in a querulous tone as if he was well acquainted with the mission on which Hiram had been sent:

"I had come to think you counted on staying with

the blooming Britishers, instead of coming back here to do your share of playing at soldiering."

"I hope I may never run the same risk among the lobster backs again. It was too tight a squeeze to suit me," Hiram replied grimly, and added, "Are the gentlemen in?"

"They were when I came on duty, and I reckon none of 'em have slipped away since."

"Then we'll go in," and without further ceremony Hiram entered the building as if it was his own home, I following close at his heels as a matter of course, never dreaming that we were to meet an officer, owing to the lack of military show. I began to believe I had simply been brought there to speak with one of the citizens.

I came speedily to know, however, that we were at the headquarters of the Committee of Safety, that body of men which stood at the head of what you might call the "rebellion," and they all unguarded except for that farmer-sentinel at the door, who was seemingly ready to admit any that might desire to enter.

Telling me to await his return in a room which looked not unlike one that might have been fitted up for a merchant's use, Hiram disappeared, his heavy footsteps betokening that he had ascended to the floor above, and ten minutes later a cry of joy burst from my lips when none other than Doctor Warren himself entered the room.

"So it was you who sent for me, sir?" I asked, and he replied:

"Remembering what you said about raising a company of Minute Boys, and believing you would do so, I fancied it might pleasure you to know that there was come so soon an opportunity to aid the

Cause. I counted on seeing two, however," he added as if in disappointment.

In the fewest possible words I told him of our misadventure the night previous, and asked if he believed it might be possible for us boys to do aught toward effecting the poor lad's release.

"I question if an equal number of men could do anything," the doctor replied, speaking as if he was sorrowful because of not being able to hold out hope. "His father is known as a Son of Liberty, and it will most like be charged against him that he was attempting to carry information to us rebels here in Cambridge, therefore he will be guarded more closely than if he had been guilty of some grievous crime."

I strove unsuccessfully to choke back the sob which finally escaped my lips, and then, thinking that if I was to have any opportunity to serve the Cause it ill became me to play the part of a baby, asked with as much firmness as I could muster:

"What work have you for us Minute Boys to do, sir?"

"The Committee of Safety believes that you lads can be of great service in bringing to us news from the town, and it was to discuss with you how best one of your company might make his way to us here, when you had learned that which it would advantage us to know."

"I do not believe it would be possible to lay out any one route by which we would be able come at all times." I made bold to reply. "On certain nights we might perchance set off from Fox hill, and come across without difficulty. Again we could, perhaps, make Barton's point our place of departure. In fact it would depend upon where the

red-coats had been stationed, and what they were about."

"Yes, yes, lad, I understand that full well. What we had in mind was to settle how you might hide skiffs at these various places in order to take sudden advantage of any favorable opportunity. Your father is in camp; have speech with him, and come back to me here an hour later."

If Hiram Griffin had been standing near the door listening to our conversation he could not have entered the room at a better moment, for the doctor had but just spoken those words which were the same as token of my dismissal, when he came in, and I asked if he could tell me where my father might be found.

It seems no more than right I should set down here the fact that Hiram Griffin, during all the time I knew him, seemed ever to be in possession of such information as a curiously inclined person might pick up. I believe of a verity he spent all his spare moments gathering that which seemed at the time useless knowledge, for, leave him four and twenty hours in town or camp, and he had become acquainted with all the minor personages and details of the place.

In answer to my question he motioned for me to follow, and so I did with such good avail that within a quarter-hour I was in my father's arms, he pressing me to his heart as if I had just come out from some terrible danger.

It goes without saying that I soon made him acquainted with all which had taken place from the time Hiram Griffin entered our home, and when I spoke of the possibility that we Minute Boys might succeed in releasing Archie from his imprisonment,

he said emphatically, as if the matter admitted of no argument:

"You must not for a moment think of any such desperate venture. Even if the lad was not guarded as he surely is, what could any number of you boys do toward releasing him? It would be opposing yourselves to all the king's forces that are at present in Boston, and that is the same as if I had said you would come to certain death."

Then, as if to dismiss the matter without question, he began to speak with me of what the Committee of Safety believed our Minute Boys might be able to do in aid of the Cause, and explained where we could lay our hands on at least three skiffs which he knew had been secreted by those who loved the colonies.

"You will be told, before leaving here, how to get possession of the boats; but as to disposing of them in such places as may best suit your conveniences and opportunity in leaving the town, I can offer no advice. That is a matter which you lads must settle among yourselves later."

"Do you believe we will be aiding the Cause?" I asked, still doubtful as to whether these true men here in Cambridge were minded to lean upon us Minute Boys to any great degree.

"If you are prudent, close-mouthed, and energetic, there is no question but that you may serve the army which is to be raised, by bringing information of what goes on in Boston, better than could an equal number of men."

Then my father gave me much advice regarding the future, urging, which was unnecessary, that I should ever hold the good of the Cause above discomfort, above suffering, above even my own life.

It mattered little, he declared, if we who had begun the struggle should go down into the Valley of Death, so that we left behind, for those who were to come, a land free from misrule and the oppression of tyrants.

Now, strange as it may seem, having once arrived in Cambridge I forgot how bitterly hunger and thirst had assailed me during the four and twenty hours just past, until my father was come to an end of his loving converse, when suddenly my desire for food and water returned like a flood, and I cried as if in pain.

One would have thought the dear man had done me some grievous wrong by not remembering that I might stand in need of refreshment, so many were the words of reproach which he addressed to himself while leading me to where I speedily found all that could be desired.

In going through this encampment it seemed that already had we of the colonies gathered a vast army, yet my father told me there were less than five thousand men then in Cambridge; but promised that they would be speedily increased in numbers as the days went by.

"It is but the beginning," he said, "already are those who favor the Cause marching toward this place as rapidly as may be, though as yet we have no real military head. The Provincial Congress has voted to raise an army of thirteen thousand six hundred men. Word has been sent out both by the Congress and Committee of Safety to other colonies, asking them to send all the troops they can spare, and Doctor Warren has written a stirring appeal, as you shall read, for I have made of it a copy."

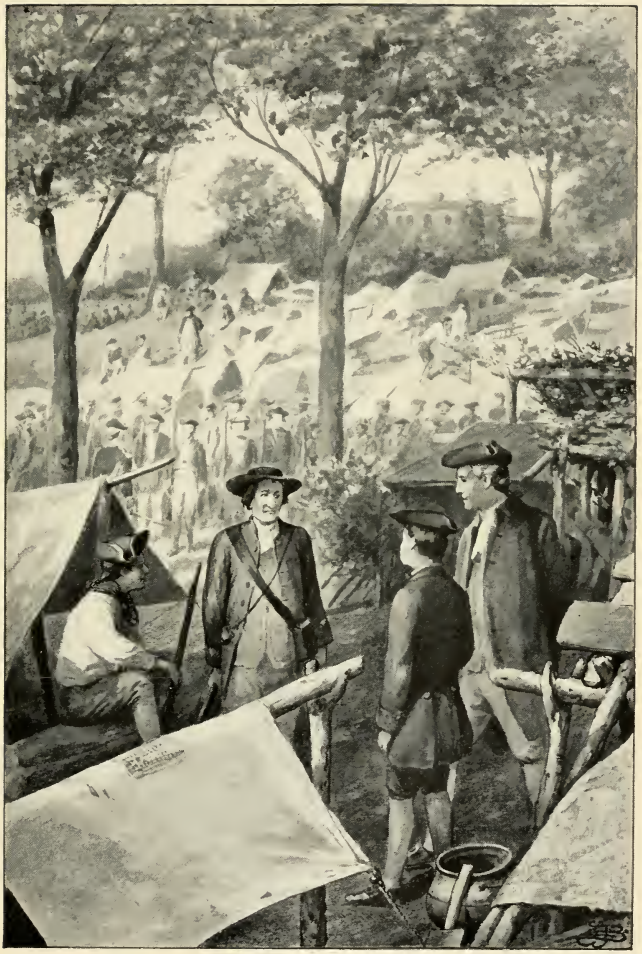
Having said this he took from his pocket a folded paper which he gave to me, and I can set down exactly what was written upon it, for I have the document before me even to this day. It is as follows:

"In Congress at Watertown, April 30th, 1775.

"*Gentlemen,*—The barbarous Murders of our innocent Brethren on Wednesday the 19th Instant, has made it absolutely necessary that we immediately raise an army to defend our Wives and our Children from the butchering Hands of an inhuman Soldiery, who, incensed at the obstacles they meet with in their bloody progress, and enraged at being repulsed from the Field of Slaughter, will, without the least doubt take the first Opportunity in their Power to ravage this devoted Country with Fire and Sword. We conjure you, therefore, that you give all Assistance possible in raising an Army. Our all is at Stake. Death and Devastation are the certain Consequences of Delay. Every Moment is infinitely precious; an Hour lost may deluge your Country in Blood, and entail perpetual Slavery upon the few of your Posterity who may survive the Carnage. We beg and entreat you, as you will answer it to your Country, to your own Conscience, and, above all, as you will answer to God himself, that you will hasten and encourage, by all possible Means, the Enlistment of Men to form the Army, and send them forward to Headquarters at Cambridge, with that expedition which the vast Importance and instant Urgency of the affair demands.

"JOSEPH WARREN, President."

I would I might set down all I heard and saw during that day in Cambridge; but it cannot be if



THE ENCAMPMENT AT CAMBRIDGE.

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I am to tell the story of what we Minute Boys succeeded in doing during a certain portion of the year of Grace 1775.

It is enough to say that before nightfall I had received all the instructions and advice that could be given, and was ready to make an attempt at getting into town once more, mourning meanwhile because of having left the skiff so far away that a long tramp would be necessary in order to come at her.

Even amid his duties, and they were many, Doctor Warren had time to think of me and my well-being, for when, near to sunset, I was standing with my father in front of the building occupied by the Committee of Safety, already taking leave of him, the doctor came up smiling as if seeing in me an old and valued friend, and said:

"I am not minded, lad, that you should tramp from here to the ferry in order to regain your skiff. Leave her where she is, and she may serve you a good turn at another time. Hiram Griffin has made ready a boat on the river, and you can embark in her, if so be it is prudent to land on either shore of the town."

"I will take the chance, sir, at one place or another," I said, feeling wondrously relieved at thus being spared the many miles of travel, and for a moment thinking it might be the doctor's purpose to send Hiram with me.

After I found the boat which had been made ready, I could not repress an exclamation of disappointment at seeing that she was a large craft, far too heavy to be handled by a single person.

"I have the long tramp before me even now," I said in a tone of dismay to my father, who had accompanied me to the river. "With a craft like that

I would have no hope of escape if peradventure the lobster backs gave chase."

"I reckon the two of us can manage to make a decent show of speed," Hiram said with a laugh, and then it was I learned that he counted on going with me into the town, taking his chances of getting back later, rather than allow me to go alone.

"You had better join us Minute Boys and have done with it, Hiram," I said gleefully, taking my seat in the boat after having bidden my father good by. "It seems to me you are like to meet with more of adventure in our company, than loitering behind here at Cambridge where all are much like a flock of sheep without a leader."

"Faith, and I begin to believe that myself," Hiram replied as he took up the oars, and a moment later we were gliding down the river in the twilight which would be deepened to darkness before we were come within sight of Boston.

No sooner were we well under way than there came to me again the same hope I had had during a portion of the time we lay hidden on Noddle island, regarding the possibility of being able to free Archie from prison, and I asked in what I intended should be a careless tone:

"Hiram, if it so chanced while you were in Boston town that there was the shadow of a hope of getting Archie out of prison, would you lend a hand?"

"Give me half a show to do aught toward thwarting the lobster backs, and I'll stay with you till the crack of doom, if so be I live that long and the job is not finished before."

"Then we'll find the way," I said as if believing

the words were true, even though at the same moment I deemed it little less than the fancy of a madman to think anything could be done to aid the dear lad while he was held so closely by the enemy.

After we were arrived at the mouth of the river, came the question as to what part of Boston we would aim to strike. There was much of danger that we might be overhauled by the guard-boats if so be we attempted to pull around Hudson's point, and yet perchance greater peril in striving to land anywhere between West and Fox hill.

"I favor the shortest voyage by water," Hiram said when I had laid before him that which was in my mind. "If so be you can hide the boat as well on this side as at your ship-yard, then let's make the venture, for I'm thinking we'll meet no more lobster backs ashore than afloat."

And so it was we headed for the nearest point, taking all the chances, and that night's work caused me to believe that he who goes boldly about a matter, is in no more danger than the timorous one who strives to make certain the way be clear before he sets out.

We came straight across from the river, landing well to the south of the Powder House, where were scrub oaks enough to afford a partial hiding place for the boat, although I doubted not that she would be come upon by the Britishers before another day had passed.

"It will be better she is taken by the lobster backs empty, than with us in her," Hiram said grimly when we drew her up on land, and it can well be fancied that I was of the same opinion.

Now was come the most hazardous portion of the

journey, for if we ran against the watch, or a red-coated squad, we were come to grief and like to join Archie instead of aiding him.

There was little sense in standing on the shore discussing the danger, therefore we set off at once across the Common as if headed for the Bridewell, until we were come to within an hundred yards of it, when we left the Alms house on our right, going over Beacon hill and thence across to the mill pond. It was a roundabout way to gain Salem street, where Silas Brownrigg lived; but it seemed to me the safest, although even by such a course we twice narrowly escaped the patrol, saving ourselves by taking refuge first in a garden, and then by sneaking behind Master Mountford's house.

So that we escaped the danger I did not count fatigue, and felt very well satisfied with fortune when we finally stood at the door of Silas Brownrigg's home, knocking cautiously lest we arouse other than him whom we desired to see.

It was not such a difficult matter to waken the lad, even though it was past midnight, for in those troublous times the people in Boston who favored the Cause slept lightly, young or old, never knowing how soon a red-coated squad of men might demand admission in the name of the king, having come through some whim of General Gage's, or of his understrappers.

Silas was not greatly surprised at seeing us. During the day while Hiram and I lay in hiding on Noddle island, he had gone to my home in search of me, and there learned from my mother that I had set out for Cambridge.

Before nightfall Seth Jepson gave him information that Archie was lodged in prison on the charge

of attempting to carry news to the " rebels," and he would have been dull indeed could he not have guessed the whole story from that on.

While Hiram and I gave him an account of our doings from the time of that unfortunate stumbling upon the watch, he fed us royally, his mother even dressing herself that she might be certain we had food in plenty, and before we were done with eating and talking we had discussed a dozen impractical plans for freeing our comrade.

It was decided that we would call the Minute Boys together at the ship-yard, and there lay before them what had been asked of us by our people at Cambridge, after which we might, if possible, find some means of aiding Archie.

Not until it was broad day did I venture to go home, for only in the light might a " rebel " walk the streets of his own town without fear of being molested by the Britishers, and once there it can well be fancied how warm was my welcome. My mother had heard from Silas of Archie's imprisonment, and it was only natural she should feel even more anxious for me than otherwise would have been the case, knowing that already was one of our number come to grief through striving to aid the Cause.

But for the fact that my father was in full accord with all I strove to do as a Minute Boy, and had even mapped out the work for our company, I believe of a verity the good woman would have insisted then and there that I give over any attempt to play the soldier.

However, she did no more than urge me to be cautious, never running my head in danger when there was no real need for it, and seemed to have the

idea that such information as we lads could pick up concerning the movements of the Britishers in Boston, would be of but little value to those brave men at Cambridge.

I had left Hiram behind me at Silas's home, for there was no reason why he should show himself, a stranger in the town, more than might be necessary; but at about nine of the clock he came to tell me that the Minute Boys were assembling at the rendezvous, and I set off to meet my future comrades.

CHAPTER V

SUSPICIOUS INFORMATION

When Hiram and I came out at Lyn street, where it was possible to have a view of the shipyard, we saw only two lads, one well over toward the point, and the other south of the pier, who were loitering about aimlessly as if they had nothing of importance with which to occupy themselves.

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask Hiram if he had made a mistake in regard to the gathering of the Minute Boys, and then I realized that Silas had taken the precaution to keep all the company out of sight except these two, who appeared to be standing watch.

At that time, when the Britishers were suspicious of the "rebels," and General Gage eager to find some cause of complaint whereby he might put in prison those who loved the colony, even a gathering of sixteen lads would not have escaped rigid scrutiny by those who misruled in Boston, and the most imprudent thing we could have done, would have been to come together in the open air where any who passed might see us.

"They are under the wharf?" I said questioningly to Hiram, and he replied curtly:

"Ay, your friend Silas told me they were to meet there," and then it seemed as if he was on the point of saying something more; but if such had been his intention he checked himself right suddenly, walk-

ing silently by my side until we were come to that point on the shore from whence we could look under the wharf.

Silas stepped out as I came into view, and said in a whisper:

"I have kept the lads out of sight lest some meddling lobster back should report a dangerous gathering. Every fellow is present, and eager to hear what you learned at Cambridge."

"Have you not told them?" I asked in surprise.

"I was not certain how far you cared to make public what had been said at the encampment, and therefore held my peace regardless of their questions, promising that you would tell them the story in due time."

As I look back now to that moment when was first assembled the company of which I had been chosen captain, it seems passing strange I should have made a blunder which was near akin to a crime, before having been with them five minutes. After the advice, repeated so many times by my father and Doctor Warren, that I be prudent, it seems as if I showed myself the thickest-headed lad in all the colony, else would I have begun the business by keeping a closer tongue.

Even while I was greeting the lads they cried out impatiently to know what I had heard and seen in Cambridge, and I, like a simple, must needs repeat parrot fashion all the instructions which had been given me, when common prudence would have dictated that I set the boys about gathering information, without making known that we were much the same as detailed as spies.

In my folly I even went so far as to lay plans how and when we might best leave the town to make re-

port, and even gave a list of those to whom we should apply for skiffs.

While my tongue ran loose I fancied Hiram moved uneasily about, as if he would say something to me privately; but I, puffed up with pride because of taking upon myself for the first time command of the Minute Boys, gave no heed to him until I had stripped myself bare of information, so that if, peradventure, there was a traitor among us he could go direct to General Gage with a story of all that we proposed to do.

Having finished the recital I asked if there were any who could give information concerning Archie which had not already been made public, and one of the lads spoke up promptly, saying:

"He is not so badly treated in prison, when you remember his father's standing among the Sons of Liberty, for instead of occupying a cell, he is locked in one of the small rooms near the end of the building."

"Who told you that?" I asked, wondering how so much of information could have been come at by our lads, and he answered, pointing with his finger:

"It was Seth Jepson told me."

Wheeling about suddenly to face the lad whom I had suspected when it was first proposed he be allowed to join the Minute Boys, I fancied there was a look of uneasiness, almost of fear, upon his face, as if he had just realized the danger of having imparted too much information. Then, like a flash, there came upon me a great wave of self-reproach because I had spoken so freely concerning our plans. If Seth Jepson was inclined to be a traitor, verily he had it now in his power to do us gravest injury.

"How did you learn so much regarding

Archie?" I asked sharply. "Have you been allowed to visit the prison?"

"It was Amos Nelson told me," Seth replied, and again I fancied I saw a troubled look come over his face.

Because of blaming myself for having told all I knew, it was much as if I strove at this time to make a scape-goat of some other.

"Do you think it well," I asked sharply, "now that you have been enrolled as a Minute Boy, promising to do whatsoever you may in behalf of the Cause, to hold converse with as rank a Tory lad as Amos Nelson?"

"And why should I not?" he cried boldly. "Would you have me advertise the fact that I am a member of this company by refusing to speak with a neighbor? For some reason, I know not what, Amos was taken into the prison, most like to work for the soldiers on duty there, and he saw Archie Hemming, or heard that the lad was locked up in the small room. It was no more than natural he should tell me the news, and I did not shut my ears to his words, believing it would be to the advantage of all here if I learned as much as he knew."

The lad spoke fairly, although, as I fancied, with too much of boldness, and just a spice of anger in his tones.

I could find no fault, for of a verity he had learned that which might be of importance to us, and yet all the old suspicions that had been in my heart came back with redoubled force, the stronger, perhaps, because I had put myself and my comrades so wholly in his power.

The mischief was worked now, however, and the only course was for me to do what I might toward

keeping, or having kept, a close watch on Seth Jepson, in the future holding my tongue in his presence as to what we would do.

To this end, and in the hope that it might be possible to take advantage of the information he had given, I proposed that a certain number of lads should loiter about the town to learn if there was anything new going on among the Britishers; afterward whispering to Silas that he send with Seth one whom he could trust thoroughly well, in order to make certain the lad held no communication with Amos Nelson.

"I will do it," Silas replied; "but to what purpose? You have suspected him from the first, and yet allowed that he should hear what our people want us to do."

"And in talking so freely I showed myself a fool. Now I would, if possible, do what I can to remedy the evil."

"All of which will be very little, because we cannot keep a spy at Seth's heels every hour, and when he has gone home for the night what will prevent him from having speech with Amos Nelson?"

Then, as if not considering the matter of so much importance as I would make it, Silas moved about among the company, suggesting that this couple go here and the other there, until he had sent away all save two, and these were lads whom he and I knew might not with truth be accused of being other than loyal to the Cause.

"Have you aught to say?" I asked when they made as if to draw near to where Hiram and I were standing, and Silas said quickly:

"It has been in my mind that we might send some of the company down near the prison to loiter there

in the hope of gaining speech with Archie, if so be Seth Jepson's words are true."

"I know where the room is, in which Amos Nelson declared he was held a prisoner," Harvey Pearson said. "If all that has been told us be true, I warrant you I can get word with him after the night has come, in case he may be made to know that we are nearby for that purpose."

"Then do you two lads attend to that matter. Silas shall look after whatsoever he thinks best, while Hiram Griffin and I set off to make certain there will be no difficulty in getting skiffs."

"I am thinking it will be well if I search for the boat you left on the shore near Fox hill," Silas suggested. "It may be I can bring her around to this place, and surely that would be of advantage, because we have no craft of any kind, unless you succeed in getting one before nightfall."

To this I agreed, and soon Silas had set off, when Hiram and I were left alone.

"Well?" he said questioningly. "If you are satisfied with what has been done this morning, and believe the Cause can be advantaged much by the Minute Boys, suppose we get our heads together to decide how I may be able to leave this town?"

"Are you going away at once?" I asked in surprise, for although he had not so much as hinted he might stay a while with us, such a thought had found lodgment in my mind.

"To what end should I stay?" he asked. "Surely a stranger like me can do nothing in the way of playing the spy in a strange town, and I am of the mind that there may be work for me in Cambridge."

"I had hoped you would wait on some chance of

being able to help us set Archie free," I said after a moment's hesitation.

"An' that were true, I would loiter here till the month's end, giving no heed to what those in the encampment might think of my absence," he replied heartily.

"Then stay!" I cried. "Greater things than freeing a lad who is shut up in the cell of a prison, has been done by poorer tools than can be found among us Minute Boys. You shall lodge at my home, going and coming as best pleases you."

"I'll stay, lad," Hiram said promptly, "and am all the more willing to do so because it strikes me you need a deal of watching."

I fancied it was possible to read in his face the thought which he had in mind, and my cheeks were flaming red as I said in the tone of one who admits his error:

"You believe I made a blunder in telling the lads all that the Committee of Safety would have us do?"

"It was more than a blunder, lad, unless you could answer for all of your comrades as you can for yourself. No harm would have come if you had held your peace, simply telling them it was necessary you should know all that was going on in order the better to guard against evil."

"Instead of which I laid myself bare," I cried bitterly, "and at the same time was suspicious of that lad, Seth Jepson. Not until he admitted getting information concerning Archie from Amos Nelson, did I realize my mistake."

"Well," Hiram said soothingly, "no good ever came of crying over spilt milk. You must try to conjure up some plan for holding Seth Jepson in

such fashion that he will be harmless, or, if so much cannot be done, see to it he is kept ignorant as to what you would do."

There was no reason why we should linger under the old wharf, and I was eager to be alone despite the fact that I craved Hiram's companionship, for it seemed as if I must work out some scheme by which it would be possible to prevent Seth Jepson from playing us false.

Therefore it was I led the way to my house, and said when we were come to the door:

"You are free here to do as you will; but I'm thinking it may be wiser if we two are not seen together overly much. I am counting on going across the Common with the idea of helping Silas, if he believes it safe to bring the boat around."

"Never fear but what I'll look after myself," he said cheerily as he entered the house, and I went my way alone.

Now it is not needed that I set down too many words in striving to tell that which is of little importance. It will be as well if I pass over four and twenty hours, and come to the afternoon of the day following my woeful blunder.

During that time many things had happened, and instead of our sending information to Cambridge, great news had come from there to us in Boston who were loyal to the Cause.

It was reported by one who had succeeded on entering the town by way of the Neck, despite all the vigilance of the guards there, that so many men had arrived from all quarters to aid in opposing the king's troops, that no less than twenty thousand were then in the encampment, and General Ward had taken command of what was really an army.

Israel Putnam had led thither a large number of volunteers from Connecticut; Colonel John Stark, of New Hampshire, was come with a great following, and the only trouble was lack of discipline and housing for so many people.

General Ward had held a council of war with all the officers who had been previously appointed by Congress, and it was decided that Boston be besieged. Fancy! we of the colonies called "rebels" were making preparations, to the extent of having raised a large army, to take from the Britishers the town they had seized!

It must have been that General Gage received the same news as had come to us, for on the hour orders were issued that no person should be allowed to leave the town without a pass, and everyone caught while attempting to depart would be imprisoned.

The Tories themselves had begun to understand that our people might be a power in the land, for straightway two hundred of them were enrolled as a military company, with that arch traitor, Timothy Ruggles, as their captain.

"It seems that the Minute Boys have nothing to do," I said bitterly to Hiram Griffin when he and I came together at my home on the evening after the Tory company had paraded on the Common. "It is from Cambridge that the important news is being sent, and we who are shut up here have no word of news to tell."

"It strikes me, lad, that you have already got quite a budget of information which our people in Cambridge should hear. Mayhap it is already known in the encampment that no one can leave Boston town without a permit, and it's also possible they

know of the arming of the Tories; but you who were assigned to the duty of gathering news should not set yourselves down idly and say that it has already been made public."

"Meaning that we should go our way carrying stale information at the risk of being arrested, and repeating what no one cares to hear?"

"Ay, lad, that is exactly what I mean. You were not asked to seek this or that; but to carry to Cambridge information of what was going on in town. It is for General Ward to say whether that which you bring him is of importance or no."

"But it seems that we have other work on hand which should come first," I said, having kept back a bit of news which I knew would startle him. "Harvey Pearson succeeded this afternoon in seeing Archie —"

"How did he get into the prison?"

"There's no such good word as that. What I mean is that he attracted his attention from the outside, and by dint of gestures, with a word here and there, made him understand that at midnight, after the guard has been changed, he will attempt to have speech with him."

Hiram looked at me in surprise, as if not crediting all I told him, and then, much as if dismissing the matter from his mind, he said:

"If I were the captain of the Minute Boys of Boston, I should strive to send a messenger to Cambridge this night. I myself have picked up such bits of news as I believe General Ward would be pleased to hear."

"But how can I go, when there is a chance of having word with Archie to-night?"

"I fail to see any reason why you should in every case act as messenger 'twixt here and Cambridge. Send some other of your company. It is true we lost the boat in which you and I came, because of having left her where any blundering lobster back might stumble upon the craft; but you said this morning that it would be possible for us to get two small skiffs at any time." Then he asked abruptly, "How high from the street is the window of the room where your comrade is held prisoner?"

"Not more than five or six feet," I replied, failing to understand; but, making no explanation, he rose quickly to his feet, clapping his hat on his head as he said:

"I'm off for a stroll. There are many things in this town I haven't seen as yet, and it would be a pity if I was suddenly called to Cambridge without having learned all that may be come at."

He went out before I could stop him, and but for the fact that Silas came in immediately afterward, I might have followed to learn what Hiram was about.

As a matter of course, my comrade was all afire with the possibility that we might soon have speech with Archie, and would have explained exactly how Harvey counted on bringing the matter about, had I not told him Hiram's opinion as to what should be done in the way of sending information to the American encampment.

Much to my surprise he pressed eagerly for permission to go as messenger, saying that above all else he desired to see the encampment so he might compare our troops with those under the command of General Gage, and, knowing he could make the

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journey as well or even better than I, there was no reason in my mind why he should not undertake the venture.

I must set down here the fact that from the time of our first meeting as Minute Boys, which is the same as saying during the past four and twenty hours, more than one of us had kept constant watch over Seth Jepson without seeing aught to blame in him. It was possible, as a matter of course, that he might have had speech with Amos Nelson; but we could not believe he had told the Tory cur all I had so foolishly divulged else, as Silas and I reasoned, we would have been brought before General Gage on some such serious charge as that of treason, unless perchance he could make of our movements a more serious offence.

Therefore it was that after we had decided Silas should go to the encampment with the information already gathered, I cautioned him against letting Seth have any suspicions of his intention, and he replied confidently:

"Leave the matter to me, Luke. I'll guarantee to get away without any one's seeing me, and what is more, come back with a whole skin. I'm not such a simple as to give myself away to Seth, or any other lad, and therefore it is I propose that at such time as best suits me, and in whatsoever manner I please, to set off for the American camp 'twixt now and midnight, keeping secret even from my mother how and when I count on going."

It surprised me somewhat that he should be willing to go away at the very time when we believed it possible to hold some communication with Archie; but, as I afterward learned, he had little faith we could get speech with the lad, and was not without

fear that one or more of us might be taken into custody for loitering around the prison. To his credit I must say, however, that the desire to see the encampment was so great as to shut out all else from his mind.

I went over with him all I believed it necessary to say to whosoever he should come upon in Cambridge, understanding that if I neglected anything of importance those whom he met would question him so closely as to bring from his lips all he had heard and seen.

"I have been keeping my eye on Seth Jepson since yesterday, whenever it could be done handily, and advise you to do the same," he said as he went out of the house, refusing to divulge anything whatsoever concerning his plans for the night.

With his words in mind I also went out into the street, counting on going to Dock square, thence past the prison and near the governor's house, with my ears open to catch any word which might be let drop by the lobster backs, and my eyes strained to get a glimpse of the lad I suspected.

Before having come to Union street, however, I fell afoul of Hiram Griffin, who looked so well content with himself that I could not refrain from asking what good fortune had befallen him, as if there could be anything good for us who loved the Cause and yet remained in Boston town.

"I have been taking a squint at the prison where I'm told your comrade is held, and am come to believe that unless these 'ere Britishers are much like weasels, it won't be such a hard thing to get him out of that scrape."

"What?" I cried in amaze and delight.

"There, there, lad, I allow I'm a good deal like

you were yesterday, letting my tongue run away with me. What I counted on saying was something much after this fashion: If we could have a cloudy night, or, better still, a stormy one, and if so be he understood to what end we might be working; and in case we could get across the town after having pulled him out, without being overhauled by lobster back or patrol, why then there would be a chance, and such an one as would tempt me to make a try for it, you lads helping, as a matter of course."

"And shall it be done to-night?" I cried eagerly, thinking Hiram was minded to go about the task at once.

"If everything had happened as I've laid out, then we might start at once; but according to the looks of things this night is likely to be a fair one, while we are needing darkness. Pulling your comrade out from the clutches of the Britishers isn't such an easy task that you can begin it whenever you are feeling so disposed. Let him know what's in our minds, and be ready to help himself when the time comes to suit us. What about sending word to Cambridge?"

I told him all my conversation with Silas, and it appeared to please him greatly that the lad was not willing to explain how he counted on going.

"He'll turn the trick all right? When you find a boy who can be cautious to the extent of holding his tongue even among friends, it may be set down as a fact that he won't come to grief, unless meeting with the direst kind of an accident. Which reminds me that it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to overlook the doings of that same Seth Jepson."

"What of him?" I cried in dismay, fearing to hear ill news.

"Nothing that I can be certain of, lad, save that I saw him chumming with a couple of lobster backs down at the dock, and it strikes me they were amazingly friendly with a lad of his size, for he's not one a man would take to naturally — an honest man I mean."

"I will go after him at once; but there is little chance of learning anything, for if he is minded to play the traitor he'll keep a still tongue in his head when I overhaul him."

"Go your way, lad," Hiram said as if he pitied me because I fancied it would be possible to convict a traitor out of his own mouth. "I am minded to have speech with Silas Brownrigg before he sets off for Cambridge, and am allowing there is a chance of finding him at home now while it is yet day."

Then Hiram Griffin left me suddenly, as if it was dangerous to be seen speaking with me on the street, and I walked slowly toward Dock square, asking myself how I might so trap Seth Jepson as to prove that he was playing us foul, while at the same time I questioned whether there was a possibility we could free the dear lad who lay eating his heart out in prison.

CHAPTER VI

A CLOUDY NIGHT

It was not needed that I should walk very far in order to find Seth Jepson. He was on the westerly side of the dock when I came into the square, talking to two or three lads whom I had good reason to believe were of Tory leanings.

Instead of appearing disconcerted because of my finding him in such company, he acted much as if it gave him pleasure that I was come, and straightway leaving his companions, advanced eagerly to meet me.

"Have you been up to the prison in the hope of having speech with Archie Hemming?" he asked as soon as we were within speaking distance, and I, suspicious of the lad, believed he thus counted on learning what we might have in mind to do, therefore replied with somewhat of sourness in my tone:

"It is too dangerous a matter to be seen loitering about that place, especially for a lad like me, whose father is known to be a Son of Liberty."

"I have seen Harvey Pearson there more than once, and thought most like you had sent him."

By this time it was clear to me that Seth was striving to learn if we had any plan on foot to release Archie, and striving to appear indifferent, as if to my mind the matter was so fraught with difficulties that it would be useless to make any attempt, I said:

"If Harvey chooses to loiter where there is great danger of being taken into custody, it is no affair of mine. On first learning that Archie had been imprisoned, I was so foolish as to say, without really believing it could be done, that we would form some plan for his rescue; but came to see right soon that it would be a piece of folly to raise our hands in such direction."

"And you will let him stay there?" Seth asked as if in surprise.

"Let him?" I repeated laughingly. "It's a question of his being obliged to stay there, and has nothing to do with us. General Gage is the one who is allowing him to remain there."

Seth appeared perplexed by my seeming indifference, and while one might have counted twenty he stood silent as if considering some matter, after which, his face brightening a bit, he led me a short distance toward Union street, where we might stand in the open with no fear any eavesdroppers could come upon us unawares, and whispered:

"Believing it would be possible for me to get more information, such as you say is needed in Cambridge, at the houses of the Tories than anywhere else, I dropped in at Amos Nelson's home, and while there heard his father talking with Master Landers, saying that a town meeting is to be held to-morrow evening. General Gage has decided that, if the selectmen will agree, the people who wish to go out of Boston may do so with their household belongings, provided they leave all weapons of whatsoever kind in Faneuil Hall, the same to be returned to them at some suitable time. Now it seems that the Tories, according to what Amos's father said, are opposed to such an arrangement, claiming that once

the rebels have departed they will not scruple to burn the place, and such men as Master Nelson and Master Landers have decided to urge that General Gage hold the women and children in the town, instead of allowing them to leave with their husbands and fathers."

Now this was information of value, particularly the latter part of it, and, therefore, much of my suspicions regarding Seth's loyalty vanished. I counted it in his favor that he had given us such a bit of news, and then came the thought that Silas should add this to the budget he was carrying to Cambridge, yet I did not believe myself warranted in going to his home, for Hiram was probably there by this time, and if too many called at the house the enemy might grow curious.

In order that Seth should not believe I was eager to leave him, I loitered in the vicinity a full half hour talking of this and that which was of no particular importance, except that all the while I strove to trap the lad into betraying his traitorous desire, if so be he had one, by some hasty word.

He spoke me fairly, even going back to that which I had said to him under the old wharf, regarding his keeping company with lads who were known to favor Toryism, and declared that it would be possible for him to learn more from them than in any other way, speaking with such an air of innocence and earnestness that I almost came to reproach myself for having suspected him.

"So long as I am on friendly terms with Amos Nelson, it is a simple matter for me to go into many places where the Britishers congregate, which would otherwise be closed in my face. Amos's father, as you well know, is a particular friend of Timothy

Ruggles, and thus it is possible for the lad to be present when the enemies of the Cause meet for deliberation, as you may understand from what I have told you already in regard to their purpose of holding the women and children in Boston town as hostages. When I joined your company of Minute Boys it was with the understanding I do whatsoever I might in behalf of the colony; but if you believe I should shut off all intercourse with Tory lads, then shall it be done."

What else could I say than advise him to keep on the same path he was traveling? At the time I was impressed by his words; but later, after having had an opportunity to turn them over in my mind, I came to ask myself why he should at that moment have so strongly defended himself when I had charged him with no evil.

The result of this interview was that I not only urged the lad to continue as he had been doing; but came to have more faith in him than ever before, yet was I sufficiently prudent to hold my tongue concerning our doings, and he got nothing from me that he could turn to the advantage of his Tory friends.

With the exception of Silas, Harvey, and Hiram, none of our company knew there was any hope or intention of striving to release Archie, and I was determined the matter should remain a profound secret if any word or act of mine could compass that end.

Although burning to speak with Silas, when I left Seth it was to saunter in the direction of Queen street as if I walked aimlessly, rather than with a purpose, and fortune so favored me that on turning into Corn hill I came upon Harvey Pearson.

"Is it well for you to remain near to the prison after having warned Archie?" I asked sharply, and the lad replied with a laugh:

"Don't fear that I'll make such a simple of myself as to do anything of the kind. I haven't been on Queen street since I warned the lad that we would be there this night."

"Have you met any others of the company?"

"Yes, mayhap four or five, all of whom are loitering about with their ears and eyes wide open; but I fancy they haven't caught much that would be of value to our people at Cambridge."

"Have you said to other than Silas or me that you count on getting speech with Archie to-night?"

"Never a word."

"Then see that you don't. I have just left Seth Jepson, and because of his questions it came to me he was eager to learn what we counted on doing; but I gave him no satisfaction."

Harvey soon set my mind at rest regarding his intention to keep our secret, and then, still having in mind to find Silas before he should leave the town, I roamed up School street, through Treamount, and down Hanover until coming to Back street, when, having idled away the greater part of the afternoon, I was so lucky as to come upon Hiram Griffin.

Hurriedly I repeated to him that which Seth Jepson had told me, and he replied with a grin:

"I got all that three hours ago, and Silas will repeat it to our friends. But doesn't the fact that Seth brought to you such news as early as possible, go far toward showing that you were wrong in suspecting him?"

"Ay, that it does, and he spoke me so fairly, explaining at greater length than when we first

came together under the wharf, why he should hold with the Tory lads, that I could not but believe, at least for the time, in his loyalty. Now, however, having had an opportunity to turn over in my mind his words, it seems as if he was too eager to prove his desire to serve the Cause. But what of Archie?" I added, and Hiram replied:

"We are needing a cloudy night, or, what would be better, a pelting rain storm before any attempt can be made toward setting the lad free. In case you can keep secret your intention, and such a night comes while he still remains where your comrade saw him, it strikes me the matter would be plain sailing; but in the meanwhile have everything in readiness for the venture."

"Meaning what?" I asked.

"First make sure of two skiffs — three would serve as well —, and have them hidden at different places, that is to say, one in your ship-yard, another off Barton's point, and the third on the shore of the Common. That done, those who count on taking a hand should decide upon certain hiding places to the end that if we succeeded in freeing the prisoner and were pursued beyond the possibility of taking to the water, each would know where he might best be secreted."

"There are many such places," I replied. "First we might find lodgement in the rope walk at Barton's point, or again at our old rendezvous; the burying place near to the Bridewell has in it many a famous hide, as you know full well. Greenleaf's yard, near the long warehouse, if you chanced to come so far near the Neck—"

"Show me some of these places," Hiram interrupted, "leading me by the most direct way so that

I may get my bearings to such purpose that it will be possible to find them in the darkness,"

"You know full well how to get to the rendezvous."

"Ay, we need spend no time over that."

"Come with me to Barton's point," I said, now grown eager through understanding that Hiram was ready to lay plans for the rescue, and determined that no loitering of mine should put any obstacle in the way.

Night was already come when I had completed the task of pointing out the available hiding places near at hand, and then we two went to my mother's house for supper.

"I'm thinking we had best bottle up forty winks of sleep, if so be we are to make a midnight visit to the prison, for no one can say whether our business may not keep us a long while," Hiram said once his hunger had been appeased, and, not waiting to learn what might be my opinion, he went upstairs to my chamber.

As a matter of course my mother was eager to know what might be afoot, for she understood, because of our long absence and Hiram's words, that something was in the wind, and therefore it was I told her what we counted on doing, and all we hoped it might be possible to accomplish on the first cloudy or stormy night.

She, dear soul, had naught to say against our purpose, knowing that we of the colonies were fully committed to the struggle against the king; but she grieved because I was like to have so much of a hand in the business.

"With your father in the army it would seem as if a poor woman's only son should be left at home

to comfort and protect her. Yet I would not say that which might prevent you from doing what your heart inclines to. You have ever been a good boy, Luke, and it would indeed be a sad blow to me should misfortune overtake you, therefore I pray that you be careful and prudent, undertaking no hazardous enterprise which may be avoided with honor and in view of your duty to the Cause."

It goes without saying that I promised to keep in mind all she had said, striving in so far as lay within my power to do what she desired. Then, following Hiram's example, for mother had promised to waken us near to ten of the clock; I went into the chamber where, despite all of excitement which was in my mind, I speedily fell asleep by the side of the widow's son.

It seemed to me as if I had but just lost myself in the blissfulness of slumber when mother wakened us with word that the time had come, and we made ready to set out, Hiram, much to my surprise, taking from behind the kitchen door a stout oaken stick, too long to be used as a cudgel.

"For what purpose is that?" I asked curiously.

"A whim of mine, lad."

"But it is not a walking stick, nor could it be used in a fight," I said laughingly, and he replied:

"Ay, true for you, and yet on the night when the clouds have gathered in the heavens, and your comrade Archie is still where he can be come at with somewhat of ease, you may find this a very timely implement to have."

I failed utterly of understanding his meaning; but since he was not disposed to make it plain I held my peace, and we two went out into the night, not by way of the streets, but through the gardens,

and along alleys, where we might pass without coming in contact with the Britishers, or with the patrol.

Before we were well started on our devious way Hiram came to a full halt, as he caught me by the arm and pointed toward the sky.

For the instant I could not make out the meaning of his gesture, and then it was I saw down in the south an inky mass of clouds which seemed to be coming swiftly against the wind, and my heart leaped into my mouth, for verily it seemed as if this would be the cloudy night we desired. If that dark mass proved what it promised, there would be such a downpour that the Britishers must keep themselves well within cover.

I was trembling with excitement as we went on, believing the time for our dangerous venture to be near at hand, and I prayed most fervently that the tempest which was seemingly gathering upon us, would burst before midnight. Then came a cold chill to my heart, as I realized that I had not had time to gather the skiffs as Hiram advised, because of having been occupied with showing him the best hiding places.

I was nigh to tears as I said to myself that however advantageous the night might be for our purpose, we could not profit by it because of lacking means of leaving the town by water — as for thinking of going across the Neck, if by any fortunate chance we succeeded in releasing Archie, that would be out of the question so closely was the place guarded.

"It's a pity we hadn't spent a little time getting the skiffs into convenient places, rather than look-

ing for a chance to hide," Hiram said as if to himself when we came up through Master Hayes's back yard to Middle street, listening there for some token of the watch, for it would be necessary to continue on as far as Hanover street by the highway where there was no opportunity of concealment.

"Then you believe this night would serve our purpose?" I said in what you might call a tearful tone, for I was near to crying with vexation because of having wasted a goodly part of the afternoon loitering about the town when I might have had everything in readiness for a hasty flight.

"Ay, lad, yonder clouds mean plenty of rain and wind, and I am much mistaken if within the hour the night be not so black and stormy that you might pass in the same street a squad of Britishers, and they be none the wiser."

"And it may be a month before such an opportunity comes again," I said mournfully. "We shall most like have storms in plenty; but never one at exactly the right moment, as this promises."

Hiram made no reply; but having satisfied himself there were no enemies in the immediate vicinity he strode on in advance swiftly, carrying the oaken stick on his arm as if it were a musket, and I could almost fancy from his bearing that he had in mind some purpose which he would strive earnestly to carry out, even though our preparations were not completed.

That this purpose was the rescue of Archie, I need not say, for just then we had none other, and I trembled with fear at the thought that we might succeed in freeing the dear lad only to find our-

selves pursued, captured and clapped into prison with him, where we would be powerless either to aid the Cause or to work to his advantage.

Once at the corner of Hanover street it was possible for me to find the way through gardens and waste land until we were come to Brattle street church, from whence the journey to the prison must be made in the open.

The clouds had gathered so quickly that by this time they veiled the stars until one could hardly see ten paces in advance, therefore we had little hesitation in going boldly to that place where we counted on meeting Harvey Pearson, nor did we count in vain. The lad came out from between two buildings as we approached, and seizing me by the arm, led us into his hiding place where we might talk, if so be we spoke in whispers, without danger of being overheard.

"Archie is on the alert, and expects our coming," he said guardedly. "Within ten minutes have I clambered up until getting a hold on the window ledge where I could tap the glass, and he returned the signal, therefore you need not linger long if you would have speech with him."

"There is no reason why we shouldn't wait here to get our breath," Hiram said in an odd tone. "I'm thinking it won't be a waste of time, and half an hour more or less can make little difference to him since he must perforce stay where he is."

"How could you tap on the glass?" I asked of Harvey. "Are there no bars outside that window?"

"Ay, and in plenty; iron bars standing less than six inches apart; but there was room to thrust my fingers between and thus come at the glass."

I turned suddenly to lay my hand upon the oaken stick which Hiram had been carrying, understanding now for the first time to what purpose he intended using it, and feeling, rather than seeing, my gesture, he whispered:

"Ay, lad, you have caught the idea at last. With this we should be able to make short work of one or two of those bars, providing we are not interrupted, and if so be there is thunder enough to drown whatsoever of noise may be made."

It was well nigh impossible for me to control myself so far as to act in any way approaching a decent fashion. The knowledge that Hiram was not only bent upon making an effort to rescue Archie that very night, but had come prepared for it, and the weather promised to be all we could desire, so wrought upon me that I was literally atremble with excitement until it was difficult to remain in one place five seconds at a time.

That Harvey was in a similar condition I could well understand, when he asked in a whisper so tremulous that only with difficulty could I understand the words:

"Do you believe he counts on doing anything to-night?"

Hiram overheard the question, spoken cautiously though it was, and replied decisively:

"Ay, lad, that's exactly what I count on doing, and save for the fact that we have no boats ready, matters could not be more to our liking. In less than half an hour, unless I have lost all power of judging the weather, we are like to have as heavy a thunder gust upon us as this town has ever seen. What more could be asked? How long think you

we might be forced to wait for another such opportunity?"

"But the boats!" Harvey exclaimed. "Of what avail may it be to release him from prison when the Britishers will make short work in their search after the day has come?"

"That part of the business is what we must take our chances on, lad. The hardest portion of the work is to get him out of yonder jail, and that done we'll trust to luck for the rest. Have you no skiffs in mind that could be come upon by some search?"

"There are boats in plenty near to Long wharf," Harvey replied; "but there the Britishers have so many men on duty that what between their guards, marines passing to and fro from the shore to the ships, and the sentinels, it would be impossible to give them the slip."

"How was Silas to get out of town?" Hiram asked, turning to me.

"Master Fish has a skiff hidden near his smokehouse, and the lad was counting on taking it."

"In all this town do you know of none other?" and Hiram shook me violently, as if he would force from my mouth that which he most desired to know.

"The skiffs belonging to our friends are hidden, for by General Gage's orders all craft that could be found have been taken possession of by the lobster backs. We might search a full day without coming upon any."

"Well, as I have said, the first thing is to get the lad out of prison. We'll trust to accident, chance, or whatever you choose to call it, for the balance."

"THE SECOND FLASH OF LIGHTNING SHOWED ME THIS SCENE."

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By this time the rain drops were beginning to fall in token of the oncoming shower, and Hiram stretched out his hand to learn how heavy was the downpour, for, screened as we were by the building, one could hardly judge of what might be going on.

Then came a flash of lightning, followed by a peal of thunder so loud that we knew the heart of the storm was directly upon us, and clutching Harvey and me by the arms Hiram literally burst, as it were, from our hiding place, as he said:

"Now has come the time; work quickly; have your wits about you, and remember that to waste ten seconds may be the ruin of our plans."

There was little need for Hiram to thus incite us. I was strung up to the highest tension until it seemed as if all the nerves in my body had suddenly been laid bare, and a moment appeared like a half-hour, so keenly did I realize that the critical time had come.

When we went out into the street the rain was falling like unto a second deluge, and it seemed to me I had not taken a dozen steps before my clothing was soaked with water; but I heeded it not save as cooling application upon my fevered body.

Harvey led us around the prison until we were come to the window of that room where we believed Archie was still confined, and without waiting a single second — it seemed almost as if while continuing the advance —, Hiram thrust the end of his oaken stick between two center bars, standing there like a statue waiting for the next volley of thunder.

The second flash of lightning showed me this scene which is yet engraven on my memory as if

painted upon canvas: Hiram holding one end of the heavy stick like a young giant; Harvey standing beside him looking up with expectancy written on his face, and I crouching near by ready to follow the slightest movement of our leader.

Then came the heavy, deafening roll of thunder. Even in the darkness I fancied I could see Hiram put all his weight and strength upon the oaken lever, and I believed that the bars gave way; but so heavy was the cannonading in the heavens that I could hear no sound, yet, as we learned an instant later, he had not only fetched away the iron screen, but crashed through the glass of the window.

Whether Archie had been aware that we stood there ready to make this supreme effort, I cannot say; but something must have warned him that the time for action had come, because the crash of thunder had not died away when I could see dimly his head and shoulders through the aperture.

Hiram must have instantly thrown aside the stout lever which had thus opened the way for Archie's liberty, because, moving with the quickness of thought, he leaped up as does a cat, seizing the lad by the shoulders and pulling him out into the street as if he had been no more than a bundle of rags.

During the merest fraction of time we stood silent and motionless, every nerve aquiver, listening with bated breath for that fatal token which would tell that the Britishers inside had been aroused, and then Hiram pushed me forward violently as he said in a hoarse whisper:

"Now then, lad, let your heels save your head, and make for Long wharf."

"But the Britishers!" I cried even as I obeyed his command.

"Let them go hang, so that we find a boat wheresoever it may be. Before this storm has come to an end we must be out of Boston town, or count on taking up our quarters in this same prison."

How we ran! Archie clasped my hand — there was no time for words —, and we two led the way at a swifter pace than I ever showed before, or ever expect to again; but even while putting forth every effort in the race was my heart grown sore with fear, for truly did it seem that Hiram had lost his wits to take such chances as would come if we tried to get from the Britishers themselves means for leaving the town.

"Better we had attempted to make our escape across the Neck," I said to myself, burning to speak my thoughts to him who had thus far led us safely, and yet not daring to slacken pace in order so to do. "There is one chance in an hundred that we might get past the guards during the tempest; but none whatsoever that we shall succeed in making our way by water, for before we can lay hands on a boat we shall be overpowered."

Luckily I did not dare slacken speed; fortunate was it indeed that Hiram had his way in the matter, and that he urged us on even while we were putting forth every effort. Had I been given command at that moment, then it is almost the same as certain we had been taken before another night came; but, thanks to the son of that good woman who fed us when we were hungry, the seemingly impossible was accomplished.

So rapid were our movements from the very beginning of the attempt at rescue, that the thunder

tempest was hardly grown to its height before we gained the water front at Long wharf, and there to my amazement we met no one; indeed, we might almost have touched shoulders with a dozen and yet not been able to see them because of the darkness and the seemingly unbroken sheets of water which descended.

Now it was that Hiram took the lead, as if fearful lest our courage might fail us, and wading waist-deep into the water alongside the wharf, he came upon a small boat which was made fast stem and stern.

We followed close at his heels, not because of belittling the danger; but because there was no other course. The peril would have been greater had we attempted to beat a retreat, and since it seemed to me that capture was absolutely certain, we might as well go one way as another.

Hiram had not stopped to unmoor the boat; but taking from his pocket a knife, slashed here and there at the hawsers until she was adrift, and the wind, driving from the south in furious gusts, sent her whirling in the direction of Hudson's point as if impelled by a dozen pairs of oars.

It was only by the merest accident that we lads succeeded in getting aboard, for Hiram was like a fury unchained, giving no heed to anything whatsoever save that goal which he had set before him. I only know that Archie and I had been swept off our feet by the waves when the craft whirled past us, yet we contrived to clutch the gunwale and were dragged, as it seemed to me, an hundred yards before succeeding in clambering aboard.

Then it was my heart sank, for hurriedly looking around as best I could in the darkness I made

out but three forms, and cried in my fear and agony:

"We have freed Archie only to leave Harvey to drown or be taken prisoner."

"Here, help me in!" came from the stern of the craft, and stepping quickly aft, hardly crediting the evidence of my ears, I felt two cold, wet hands that were gripping the stern-board.

Hiram gave no heed as Archie and I pulled the brave lad in; but was fumbling about in search of oars that it might be possible for him to guide the craft, and thus it was we were driven by the tempest from out the very midst of the Britishers where they must have been as thick as ants in a hill, although, fortunately for us, ill inclined to brave the fury of the blast in the open.

Every red-coated rascal on duty had sought some place of shelter, and Hiram must have counted upon this fact when he decided that we would despoil the enemy of at least one boat, at the same time taking chances which seemed little short of madness.

Hiram succeeded in finding that for which he sought, and when he was on the forward thwart with a pair of oars in his hands, pulling only when it was necessary to give her a sheer from the land, or toward it, he said in the tone of one who speaks in a place of security:

"I call that a mighty neat trick, and if so be you lads are lucky enough to turn the tables once more on the Britishers in the same clean fashion that we have done to-night, you can count yourselves on the way to earn commissions in the American Army."

"It is you who should have the commission, if this night's work counts in the eyes of our people,"

I cried, determined that the brave fellow should have all the credit due him. "Except you had forced us, we would never have made such a venture, for when we left the prison it seemed to me you were little better than a madman to make a try for that which has turned out so happily."

"There was little of madness in it, lad, when you count that we had everything our own way. The only surprising part would have been that we had come across a Britisher while the rain was pouring down as now. I haven't seen overly many of the king's men; but those I have come across took good care of their bodies, and hated like the mischief to do that which might mar the beauty of their flashy uniforms."

Then it was that Archie spoke for the first time since Hiram hauled him neck and crop out through the shattered window:

"If ever the time comes when I can repay you fellows for what you have done this night, I'll strive hard to make the reckoning even."

"You'll not do anything of the kind, lad, for we have done only our duty. I'm hoping every one of us would have worked just as eagerly had the prisoner been a stranger, for we who count on aiding the Cause must reckon everyone who loves it, as a friend."

It was Hiram who spoke, and his tone was so fervent, I might almost say devout, that I was moved by it more than by the dangers through which we had just passed, and came to understand better what it meant when we of the colonies armed ourselves against the king's men.

"I was expecting to see you because of what Harvey told me; but did not think for a minute you

would dare make any effort to set me free," Archie said after a long pause, and Hiram added with a chuckle of mirth which I could hear even above the whistling of the wind and the swish of the waves:

"It must have surprised you when that 'ere glass was broken in; but I noticed it didn't take a great while to get your wits about you."

"I had been warned. Standing near by the window when the lightning flashed, I saw you, and knew what might be your purpose."

"'Tis a great night for business like this," and again Hiram chuckled as if the whole matter was a huge joke. "Here we are in one of his majesty's own boats, snug as bugs in a wet rug, and being carried faster than any ten-oared barge could move, we not raising a hand. Talk about getting out of Boston town! I can't say that it is any great trick, and we are going as comfortably as possible except, perhaps, that there's a little too much water about. If this 'ere thunder gust holds out ten minutes longer we should be well off the Penny ferry. It would give Silas a good shaking up if we got into camp before he did," and Hiram laughed long and loud, seeming to enjoy making a noise now that we were the same as free from pursuit.

Then it was that Harvey put me to shame by much the same as proving I had not head enough to hold command of the Minute Boys.

"I can see full well why Archie should go to Cambridge," he said, forced almost to scream in order to make his words heard above the noise of the tempest; "but what puzzles me is why Luke Wright and I are going? It appears as if we were advertising the fact that we had a hand in the

lad's escape, whereas, by returning to our homes now, and showing ourselves to-morrow morning in the usual places, no suspicion would be aroused."

Hiram stared at the speaker as if in surprise during a dozen seconds, and then said emphatically:

"That's no mean head you've got on your shoulders, lad, and it mixes me up not a little because I was such a simple as not to have thought that for you and Luke Wright to disappear at the exact time Archie did, would be much the same as confessing that you had a hand in the neat little trick done at the Britishers' prison."

Now that Harvey had spoken, reminding me of my duty, I could understand full well how foolish we would be to remain with Hiram and Archie. We could gain nothing by going to Cambridge, because Silas was most like already on his way there carrying such information as had been gathered, and the dullest fellow that ever walked the streets of Boston town could not fail to realize how much of trouble we might be laying up for ourselves. Therefore it was that I asked quickly of Hiram whether or no he could work the boat so far in shore that we might land.

By this time we were well off Barton's point, having sailed around the easterly end of the town, and the tempest was yet as fierce as when we set off.

"Bless your soul, lad, I can put her almost anywhere on this 'ere shore, though I don't claim to be what you might call a sailor, nor even a good imitation of one: but it's a mighty poor stick that can't work a pair of oars."

As he spoke he swung the little craft around to

the westward, thus bringing the full strength of the wind on the port side, which caused her to make more leeway than headway.

For some moments I was in doubt as to whether he might be able to work the trick; but he showed himself on this occasion, as he did many times in the days that came, a fellow bent upon accomplishing that which he set out to do, and I verily believe he would have run his neck close into a Britisher's noose rather than admit that this thing or the other was impossible for him.

The storm was well-nigh spent when Harvey and I leaped on shore near the rope walk; but the wind yet blew strong and steadily so that the journey might be continued without much labor, if so be Hiram counted on making land at the Penny ferry.

"We'll see you before many days have passed!" I cried to Archie, and he replied:

"I hope so, Luke Wright, for even though I am going among friends, out of the king's prison, my heart is sore at parting."

"Never fear but that we'll meet before growing gray headed," Hiram added. "It's an even bet, though, that the two of us don't venture into Boston town within the next ten days."

CHAPTER VII

THE SUMMONS

It was as if this escape of Archie's had brought an end to anything of excitement, so far as we Minute Boys were concerned, and to lads who were burning with impatience to have a hand in great matters, it appeared that our people were no longer striving to struggle against the king.

Harvey and I, after having been set ashore by Hiram Griffin, succeeded in making our way down from Barton's point without meeting anyone who offered to molest us. Perhaps because of the disagreeable weather the patrol had sought shelter; but for whatsoever reason they seemingly disappeared off the face of the earth I never troubled my head, since it enabled us to gain our homes in safety.

I had fancied a hue and cry would be raised next morning, when it was discovered that Archie had unceremoniously taken his departure from the prison; but, so far as concerned the outside world, it was as if nothing had happened. The lobster backs held their peace; but I was not such a simple as to believe no effort would be made toward learning who had given him assistance.

On that morning when I went down to Dock square after having spent four or five hours in bed; it was with nervous trembling that I came upon a

red uniform, whosoever the wearer, fearing lest I might be charged with having aided in the escape of a prisoner.

No one appeared to give any attention to me however, and then I listened for a proclamation by the town crier; but none met my ears, neither did I see printed notices of any kind referring to Archie.

During the forenoon I came upon Seth Jepson, and believed it was from him I would first learn the news; but if that lad had any inkling of the matter he kept a close tongue in his head. Question as I might, it was impossible to get from him a single word on the matter, and I finally came to believe he remained in ignorance of the previous night's doings, more particularly after he asked me with such an innocent air that I could not believe it assumed, if we did not propose to make some effort for the relief of our comrade.

He had nothing of importance to report, and I left him in Dock square loitering about in the hope of overhearing some conversation among the lobster backs which would interest our friends at Cambridge, as I went boldly through Queen street.

There it was I met Harvey Pearson, who had come upon much the same errand as I, and when we were within speaking distance he asked anxiously:

"Have you heard anything?"

"So far not a word. I have just left Seth Jepson, and it is evident he has failed of learning the news."

"Can it be the lobster backs haven't missed him yet?" Harvey asked, and I proposed what might seem reckless:

"Let us walk past the prison and see if anything has been done toward mending that window."

This we did, taking care, however, not to gaze too intently at the walls of the jail; but seeming to have our attention attracted toward the opposite side of the street, yet before we were well come up to the scene of the previous night's adventure it was possible to see that the mischief wrought by Hiram Griffin had been partially repaired. The bars, which he had bent with his oaken stick, were not yet straightened, but had been put into place after a fashion, and the shattered window was closed with heavy planks.

There was no longer any question but that the Britishers were well aware their prisoner had given them the slip, yet why they failed to raise a hue and cry passed all my understanding. If searchers had been sent out in the hope of capturing the fugitive, neither Harvey nor I had chanced to come upon them, which was the more strange because there were many so-called rebels who lived near to my home, and such section of the town would have seemed to be the best hunting ground for the red-coats.

Chew it over as we might, neither Harvey nor I could make head nor tail of the matter. Both of us had the good sense to realize that it was best to let sleeping dogs lie, and the less inquisitive we showed ourselves to be regarding Archie, the least likelihood there was we would bring suspicion upon ourselves.

And now, because during the week that followed nothing of import happened so far as we Minute Boys were concerned, I will pass over that time with as few words as may be.

During these days Hiram failed to keep his word in regard to coming back; Archie remained in camp as a matter of course, since it would have been the height of folly for him to venture into Boston, and it was as if Silas had decided to stay with the army.

Seth Jepson seemed striving to show himself exceedingly busy in the work that had been set him, and took advantage of every opportunity to report the lightest word he heard from the enemy; but, however, bringing nothing of importance which would warrant the sending of a message to our people.

Harvey and I came to the conclusion that the Britishers believed it best to keep secret the fact that a prisoner could escape so readily, and since Archie was no great catch, having been taken into custody only because found prowling around the streets at night, they were fairly willing to let go their grip of him.

During this time, however, General Gage had not been idle. It will be remembered that I have set down the substance of an agreement between the selectmen of the town and the king's representative, to the effect that any person so disposed might leave the town, after having deposited his weapons at Faneuil Hall.

I have also stated what Master Nelson and Master Landers had discussed, and it seemed that the Tories of Boston exerted considerable influence over General Gage, for after having allowed a few of the people to go out with their household belongings under the protection of a pass signed by himself, the governor put his foot down against any women or children leaving. It was much the same

as if he had said he would not keep his pledged word.

We, who were shut up in Boston, learned that the people of Charlestown, who formerly numbered nearly three thousand, had become so alarmed that they left their homes, believing the Americans in Cambridge could afford them better protection than might be had from the king's hirelings. So thoroughly panic stricken were the inhabitants, that it was said no more than two hundred now remained in the village.

We heard now and then of this colony or of that sending troops or money to our aid, although how the news came I cannot say, and it was whispered among the people who were true to the Cause, that Rhode Island had sent as many as fifteen hundred men under Brigadier Nathaniel Greene.

Connecticut voted to raise six thousand soldiers, and the Provincial Congress passed an act authorizing the enrollment of two thousand troops in addition to those who were already in the field.

Nor did the Britishers content themselves with the large force already in Boston. The Cerberus man-of-war came into the harbor having on board, in addition to the troops, three generals: Howe, Clinton and Burgoyne.

It was as if General Gage had until this time considered his army too small to cope with our people, but now that new troops were arrived, increasing his force to at least ten thousand men, he gathered courage to impose yet further upon us, and issued a proclamation which declared the town under martial law, stating in the document that all our people who favored the Cause were "rebels, parricides of the Constitution." He offered a free

pardon to all who would swear to serve the king loyally, with the exception of Masters John Hancock and Samuel Adams. These last two he declared traitors, and offered a reward for their capture.

We in Boston had had but little liberty under the British rule, and now were to be treated more like prisoners than before, for any red-coat holding the king's commission could seize us on the streets, or even take us from our homes, without form of law; but simply because of his own whim or suspicion.

I had more than once, at the time when it was believed General Gage would be gentleman enough to keep his word and allow the citizens to leave the town, urged upon my mother that she seek safety near the American army, but she, dear soul, hesitated to abandon her home, and I failed to insist as strongly as I might have done, fearing lest her going would involve mine also, thus depriving me of an opportunity to serve the Cause with my company.

Then came the time when the Britisher who called himself a gentleman, went back on his word, refusing to allow women or children to go out from the town, and there was no longer an opportunity for her to escape.

As the days rolled on and we neither saw those of our number who had fled to Cambridge, nor were called upon for any service, it began to appear to me as if I need not have been so eager to remain in Boston because of the Minute Boys, since most like there were so many men joining the American army that lads were no longer considered of any account.

Then came the day when Hiram Griffin suddenly

appeared, coming to my home at the moment when my mother and I were breaking our fast, and one might have fancied from his manner and the business-like way in which he spoke, that no more than a dozen hours had passed since we last saw him.

I literally overwhelmed him with questions, so eager was I to learn of Archie, and what progress our people might have been making against the king which had not come to us in Boston, until before each had satisfied the other's curiosity the forenoon was nearly half spent.

He told me that he and my comrade had arrived at Cambridge the morning after the escape, having encountered no danger on the way, and being forced to land at the Penny ferry owing to the fact that the wind blew so strongly they could not hope to pull the boat down to the Charles river. Silas had gained the encampment and unfolded his budget of news before they arrived.

From some of our people who came out of the town under pass from General Gage, it was learned that no action had been taken by the Britishers regarding Archie's escape, yet it was not safe for him to venture into Boston. Silas had remained with the army because, so his father believed, there was no real need of his coming back until work had been found for us Minute Boys to do. Master Brownrigg claimed that there were enough of us in town to get all the information regarding the Britishers that could be desired. In fact, as Hiram represented it, there was little need for us lads to act the part of spies while so many of our people could procure a British pass.

Now, however, was come the time when we lads were called upon to show of what metal we were

made, and, therefore, Hiram had been sent to summon the Minute Boys; not on an expedition of a warlike nature, much to my sorrow, but simply to aid in the work of gathering supplies for the army at Cambridge.

Our soldiers numbered no less than sixteen thousand, so Hiram assured me, and while the people from the country round about gave generously from their stores, it was a difficult matter for the leaders, all unprepared as they were to care for such a body of men, to keep up the supply of provisions. It had been decided that, not only in order to provide rations for our own people, but to aid in cutting off food from the enemy, the farms on the islands near to Boston were to be ravaged and everything eatable, whether belonging to friend or foe, was to be transported to Cambridge, if indeed that might be done.

Now it seems, as I learned later, for he himself was all too modest to admit having been given command of an important undertaking, that Hiram had been charged with the work of seizing on Noddle and Hog islands such provisions as might be found, to which end he was provided with two small sloops, and had selected from the army four men whom he could trust to aid him in the task.

As a matter of course such small force was all insufficient to perform the necessary labor; but he had hit upon the plan of impressing us Minute Boys into service, and therefore it was that during the night, and despite the strict guard kept by the Britishers, one of his vessels, taking advantage of a stiff breeze, had set him ashore near to Hudson's point, from which place he made his way to my home.

"Now this is my plan;" he said to me when we were done with swapping information. "You have from now until nearly midnight to call your company together at the rope walk where I landed. Sometime between then and daybreak my comrades will either come near to the land in one of the sloops, or send two or three boats to bring you off, and an hour after sunrise, if so be everything goes as I have reckoned, we will be putting aboard a cargo of such stuff as shall fill the stomachs of those who are loitering near to Cambridge awaiting a good chance to slap his majesty in the face."

At the time it did not appear to me we Minute Boys were called upon to play any very heroic part in the so-called "rebellion." It seemed that there would be little of glory gained in loading the sloops with live stock, wheat and corn, and yet before the task was accomplished we Minute Boys of Boston saw what was a veritable battle, although on a small scale, but with as good an opportunity of shedding one's blood as the most ardent warrior could have desired.

I smile even at this late day when I think of what a simple I showed myself to be while setting about the task, for on summoning my comrades I was ashamed to tell them we were to work like drovers and farmers rather than as soldiers, therefore led each to understand we were bent on some secret mission to an island near by. And when one and another speculated as to the possible danger to be encountered, or of the opportunities of showing ourselves worthy to be called soldiers, I nursed such fancies until they believed we were going as an independent company to slaughter or to capture whole squads of trained, red-coated soldiers.

As a matter of course I set about the work of getting speech with each of my company immediately Hiram had finished explaining matters, and so difficult was it to find them all, scattered about the town as they were, that night had come before I returned to my home.

Then I had succeeded in warning every member of the company, even including Seth Jepson, to be at the rope walk on Barton's point, recommending that they come singly, rather than in couples or squads, so that there might be less chance to arouse suspicion, and right weary was I from much running to and fro.

Mother had made ready a hearty supper because of my having fasted at noon, and Hiram and I ate until the wonder was that we were not so heavy as to be incapable of active exercise. But when we set out for the rendezvous I speedily learned that whether my companion had spared the food, or devoured more than his share, it was possible for him to move at such a pace as caused me to breathe quickly and hard in the effort to keep at his heels.

It is not to be supposed that we could go from my home to Barton's point through the streets without coming upon some of the lobster backs, for since the town was put under martial law the watch had been replaced by soldiers, and there were so many of them patroling the streets 'twixt sunset and sunrise that one could hardly poke his nose outside the door without brushing it against half a dozen.

We were not delayed in the short journey, however, because of my familiarity with the gardens and byways on the route, which admitted of our making fair progress while shunning the streets, and he who could have pounced upon us would

indeed have been a quicker-witted lobster back than I have yet seen.

When we arrived at the rope walk we found some of the lads overly impatient, as indeed they had good cause to be, for those whom I warned earlier in the day had gone immediately to the rendezvous, therefore were forced to cool their heels there from six to eight hours, which must have seemed a long time when you realize that they were literally burning with impatience to play the part of soldiers, and I could not but ask myself with somewhat of anxiety, how they might view the situation when coming to understand that they were to be employed as drovers, or in carrying bags of grain from the shore to the vessels?

"Are they all here?" Hiram asked me when standing beneath the shelter of a lean-to which served as store-house, as he surveyed my company.

"Ay, every one of them," I replied carelessly, believing it was possible to see them all, and as I spoke Harvey Pearson piped up in his shrill voice:

"All save Seth Jepson. An hour ago he suddenly remembered that he must attend to some work which his mother had laid out for him, and went off at full speed, promising to come back before you showed yourselves."

"So! He's the lad you believed might have a leaning toward Toryism," Hiram said sharply as he wheeled about to face me, and on the instant I understood that he doubted the truth of Seth Jepson's excuse for leaving the company.

"How long did he stay here?" I asked of Harvey, whom I knew to have been one of the first to arrive at the rendezvous.

"Perhaps a couple of hours. I did not take

much heed of the time because we were all speculating as to what duty might be required of us, and therefore the minutes passed swiftly."

"Are all the others here?" and Hiram turned once more to me.

In order to be certain this time I called the names of each lad in turn, and, counting them, found we had thirteen present, which, with Archie and Silas, whom Hiram said were on board one of the sloops, made up our full number.

It could readily be seen that Griffin was sorely disturbed in mind because of Seth's absence, and his uneasiness was speedily shared by Harvey and me as we put our heads together, trying to make out how the lad might do us harm.

Once more I came to believe him an arrant Tory who had joined the company only that he might betray it. This was the first opportunity he had had to play the traitor, and it seemed of a verity he counted to take advantage of it, understanding that now was come the time when the king's men might find us in unlawful assemblage with a member of the American army in our midst.

"He had no chance to betray us before, and has therefore acted as if his desires and ours run in the same channel," I said bitterly to Harvey, striving in vain to hit upon some plan by which we could thwart Seth's purpose. "Now has come the time when he may lay us all by the heels, and he intends to do it as surely as you and I stand here."

"Ay, so it appears to me," Harvey replied. "It is not reasonable to suppose the fellow would have left home knowing he was like to be gone several days, without first having made everything ready for his absence. Thus suddenly remembering

something his mother told him to do, is a childish excuse, and shows that he thinks we are a party of idiots to take any stock in him."

"How long think you would it take a lad to go from here to the governor's house, have speech with him, and come back?" Hiram asked, and I knew full well he was trying to figure how many moments of freedom were left to us.

Harvey declared it might be done in less than two hours; but I was of the mind that much more time would be required, because even a Tory lad would not speedily be admitted into the presence of his high-mightiness, Governor Gage. Then there were the chances that this governor sent by the king might not be at home, or, receiving Seth at once, some little time would be required to muster a squad of soldiers, for it was likely that if they counted on taking into custody thirteen lads and a man a considerable show of force would be made. Therefore it was I set it down as three hours before we had good right to expect any result from Seth's sudden remembrance of his mother's desires.

"We'll make it two hours and run no risk," Hiram said after a moment's thought, and fell to pacing to and fro as if struggling to solve some question which he found difficult of answer.

Little was said by us lads as we stood there beneath the shelter of the lean-to. Each realized that in a short time he might be a prisoner, and all knew, or believed they knew, that there was much trouble in store for us through Seth Jepson.

During an hour I believe the only words I heard spoken were concerning what this lad or that would do to the traitor when the opportunity came, until

tiring of hearing such idle words I said to Harvey impatiently:

"It is of little use for us who are in the frying pan to talk about throwing another into the fire. Instead of striving to decide how you may serve out Seth Jepson, when it is likely he will get the first blow at us, spend your time hunting for a means of escape, if so be the lobster backs come upon us."

"There is nothing to be done in that line," one of the lads said bitterly, "unless perchance we turn tail now and go to our homes. Then would Seth Jepson be in a pretty muddle because of having led the lobster backs here on what appeared as a false scent."

This idea caught the fancy of many. By our dispersing instantly Seth would seemingly show himself a lad ready to make mischief among the king's people. It would be a mighty neat way of turning the tables on the traitor, and right thoroughly would I have loved to do it but for the fact that we would be abandoning Hiram.

Before many minutes had passed I came to understand that there was certain danger of our failing in this the first real work which had been given us to do, for as the lads discussed the matter they became more and more impressed with the idea of hoodwinking the traitorous Tory and the lobster backs at the same time. They began to believe it would be of more importance thus to prove Seth a liar, than to join in the business on which Hiram was engaged.

It required all the arguments I could bring to mind, to hold them there in a body, and so insistent on carrying out their plan did some of them

become, that I was forced to call on Hiram, who speedily put an end to their insubordination by saying in a scornful tone:

"A fine set of lads are you to call yourselves Minute Boys, who haven't learned that a soldier's first and last duty is to obey! Because of seeing some chance to play a trick on a scurvy Tory, you would straightway throw all orders to the wind, leaving me to return to Cambridge to make report that the Minute Boys of Boston refuse to follow where duty calls. Do you not realize that if Seth Jepson brought the lobster backs here, and failed to find you, he would give to whatsoever officer accompanied him the name of each and every one, to the end that 'twixt now and morning you might be ferreted out and lodged in prison? There's like to be two ends to such a trick as you would play, and I'm thinking he would come out best in the end."

"But by staying we are like to be taken into custody, if so be your vessels or boats fail to come on time," one of the company suggested, and Hiram replied in ringing words:

"Ay, and then would you have no reason for shame, since to be captured while performing a duty is often the fate of a soldier, and does not work to his discredit; but suppose you refuse to obey the orders which I have brought, and then are taken, like rats in their nests, false to the Cause, false to your friends, and false to yourselves? How about it then?"

It was as if he had lashed them with a whip. The lads shrank back into the further corner of the lean-to as if unable to stand against his anger and scorn, and I noted well that those who talked

the loudest of the pleasure of playing the trick on Seth, were showing the greatest fear of Hiram.

It was all very well, however, to speak of doing our duty; but not so pleasant to remain there with no means of escape, knowing beyond a peradventure that within a couple of hours at the longest the lobster backs would be upon us. While there was no thought in my mind of sneaking away, I was frightened by the prospect before me, and all the more so because Hiram appeared so disturbed. He went from the building to the edge of the water twenty times in as many minutes, striving to pierce the gloom with his eyes, hoping to see the boats which, according to his arrangements, should have been there before then.

Finally, when he had remained on the shore gazing seaward longer than usual, I went to him and asked in a whisper:

"Is there any chance they may have mistaken your plans, and will fail to come to-night?"

"None whatever, lad, unless some accident has befallen them, for everything was mapped out as plainly as could be done by words. It was on Hog island we were to do our first work; one of the sloops was to go there, while the other, towing all our small boats, should have been off this point an hour ago."

"What is to be done?" I asked helplessly.

"Nothing save stand here and take our medicine like men. We won't give over hope until the last minute, for even when the red-coats are in sight, there may be a chance for us to slip off in the darkness if so be the boats are at hand."

Then came a weary time of waiting which seemed long because of our anxiety. I could well fancy

there was in the mind of every lad, as in mine, a picture of the prison into which we would speedily be thrust, and thus an end be put to all our dreams of glory that was to come while working for the Cause.

As the minutes passed and we failed to hear any sound from out over the waters betokening the coming of those who were to meet us, it was only with difficulty I refrained from crying aloud in my impatience and fear, and when one of the boys moved suddenly, breaking the silence, I started in alarm, believing the lobster backs were close at hand.

When two full hours had passed, and we knew beyond a peradventure that Seth had played the traitor, it seemed as if our time of trial was close at hand. Hiram paced to and fro along the shore, ceasing either to return to the building, or make reply when I attempted to speak with him. All his mind was fixed upon that vague space in the darkness from out of which he was striving to see that which we so sorely needed, and then when it did come he was like unto one who has received a cruel blow. Staggering as if drunken, he said hoarsely to me who chanced to be standing by his side:

"They are coming, and just in time to save our necks, for I question whether the red-coats would give us much more of a breathing spell!"

The lads who had been crouching in the lean-to, most like trembling with fear, now rushed out to where Hiram and I stood knee-deep in the water as if the enemy was so near that a few more inches of distance might save us, and there we remained, alternatingly turning landward expecting to hear the tread of armed men, and straining our eyes

into the gloom to see more clearly the approaching boats.

The first craft which came ashore brought Archie Hemming, and no sooner did her bow grate upon the shingle than he leaped over, clasping me in his arms as if I had only recently escaped from the grave, but to my mind there was no time to indulge in any show of affection, and almost thrusting him from me, I whispered:

"It is plain Seth Jepson has played the traitor, by going after the lobster backs to take us into custody while we remain here. There is no time to be lost; we must embark on the instant."

There was little need for me to urge that the moments were precious.

As three boats, one after another, came up to the shore, our company of Minute Boys leaped into them until each had its full cargo, and I believe not more than four minutes passed from the time Archie had clasped me in his arms before we pushed off and were heading out into the darkness toward where the sloop lay.

And we had left that shore none too soon, for our little fleet could hardly have been swallowed up by the gloom before we heard the tramp of men, and a few seconds later came the sound of angry voices, telling of the Britishers' disappointment in failing to trap us.

We had turned a neater trick on Seth Jepson than would have been possible had we gone back to our homes when the matter was first suggested, for now he might indeed give our names to the king's officers; but they would fail to find us in Boston town, and who could say when we had left?

CHAPTER VIII

HOG ISLAND

We were safe on board the sloop, which lay about half a mile from the shore, and once there I ceased to speculate overmuch as to what might be the result of Seth Jepson's treachery. That he had proven himself a traitor there was no longer the slightest chance for doubt, and I was resolved that if my life was spared the day should come when he would pay a heavy penalty for his dastardly crime.

Now, however, he had no part in our lives, nor would it be in his power to work us a wrong unless we might make an attempt to enter Boston town while the Britishers held possession.

For the time being it was enough that our company was at last fully embarked upon some service which had to do with the Cause, and while it would have pleased me beyond the power of words to express, if we had been called for some service with more of danger and more befitting soldiers than that of the transportation of grain, I was in a certain degree content, even if for no other reason than that our people at Cambridge had remembered there was such a company as the Minute Boys of Boston.

No time was lost in getting under way for the short voyage to Hog island. It seemed to me that Hiram Griffin believed every moment precious, for

he urged the crew of the sloop to their utmost, and once we were on our course, he questioned the helmsman if he was steering in as nearly a straight line as might be possible.

As may be supposed, Archie, Silas and I came together immediately we gained the deck of the sloop, for there was much we had to say to each other, although the lads so lately from Cambridge could not tell me more concerning the doings of our people than Hiram had already done.

Archie would have spent the time giving words to his gratitude because of what Harvey, Hiram and I had done toward effecting his release; but I was not minded thus to waste the precious moments when he might, instead, be telling me what he had seen while with our army.

We three were talking fast and earnestly, having ample food for conversation; but I took heed to the efforts which Hiram was making toward a speedy arrival at our destination, and my curiosity became so great I could not refrain from asking if he feared pursuit.

"I do not *fear* it lad; but according to my way of thinking the chances are more than even we shall be followed speedily, for those lobster backs whom Seth Jepson led to the rope walk will be thick-headed indeed if they fail to understand that we left Boston town by water. It is possible they may charge him with having led them on a wild goose chase; but I'm not figuring that such will be the case."

"And you believe they may come in pursuit?"

"Well, it will amount to much the same thing, though I allow that their chief purpose won't be to take us into custody."

"Why then should they give chase?" I asked in surprise, and Hiram replied in a low tone, as if he feared lest the other lads might overhear him:

"You must know that our people in Cambridge are not the only ones who need to be fed. The king's men are famous meat-eaters, and General Gage is not such a simple but that he has understood some time since that two birds might be killed with one stone if he acted promptly. To prevent us from getting supplies in the country back of Boston town would be impossible; but he can take steps to stop us from picking up what may be found on the islands, and in so doing not only deprive the Americans of such an amount of food, but take possession of it for his own troops."

I grew so surprised as he went on with his explanations that it had been impossible to interrupt him. While he had told to me in Boston what our people would have the Minute Boys do, I fancied it was the simplest of tasks, being all labor and no danger. Now, however, I was coming to understand that while acting as drovers we might find employment as soldiers, and when he ceased speaking I said in a whisper:

"Would you resist in case the king's men came upon us while we were taking a cargo on board?"

"Ay, that I would, if so be they had no larger force than two to our one."

"Have you then soldiers on board the other sloops?" I asked, not yet understanding his purpose.

"Indeed I have not; where would be the need of others when here are all the Minute Boys of Boston?" he said laughingly.

"But while the Minute Boys may be ready to

resist the king's men, they could not make much of a fist at it without weapons, and we have nothing of the kind."

"In that you are making a mistake. There are on board the other sloop muskets and ammunition enough to serve us through quite a battle, if so be you lads have what is needed in the way of backbone."

"Then there is a chance we may have to fight with the lobster backs?" I cried, forgetting that in event of an encounter more than one, perhaps, of our company might be killed, so eager was I that the Minute Boys should have an opportunity of showing what they could do.

"I count it more than a chance, lad. It is an even thing, according to my way of thinking, now that your precious Tory has given notice to the Britishers of our intention. Unless all hands of them are asleep, one or more vessels will be sent out to-morrow morning to overhaul us, therefore it is I am eager to begin the work of taking on cargo as speedily as may be, so that if they come upon us with too large a force we shall be ready for flight, and not go away empty-handed."

I was near to blessing Seth Jepson because of having played the traitor, since it might result in our winning a name for the Minute Boys, and without delay I went back to my comrades, hurriedly giving them to understand that at last our company was to be armed as befitted soldiers, even though we were lads, and, what was to me the more gratifying, it was possible that we would be called upon to measure strength with the lobster backs.

From this moment all was excitement among our lads. I question if there was one of them who did

not, like myself, fail to count the danger, because of his eager desire to prove that we might be trusted to do the work of men.

The sloop was a dull sailor, or so it seemed to us lads who were burning with impatience to come up with the other vessel that we might get the weapons in our hands, for only then would it appear as if we were real soldiers of the American army.

We could not quicken the movements of the sluggish craft fret as we might, and when, as balm to my impatience, I would have talked with Hiram concerning the possibilities of the future, he showed no further inclination to converse on the matter, thus proving, as I believed, that he was more anxious concerning the outcome of the venture than he would permit us to see, all of which was most gratifying because it accorded well with my desires.

Despite the apparently slow progress of the sloop, we were come to anchor between Noddle and Hog islands before there were any signs of coming day, and it can well be fancied that we Minute Boys lost no time in taking possession of the weapons.

These, together with the ammunition, had been stored in the cuddy of the sloop, and after each of us lads had selected a musket I saw there were no less than a dozen remaining, while of powder and balls it seemed to me the amount was so great that we could not use it all even though we loaded and discharged our muskets with reasonable rapidity during an entire day.

While we were thus engaged in what might seem to some like a childish fashion, Hiram had seen to it that the two sloops were warped in as close to

the shore as was possible without danger of their going aground. The holds of the vessels had been cleared, the hatches removed, tackles for hoisting gotten into place, and, in fact, everything made ready for the taking on of a cargo.

By this time day was come, although the sun had not yet risen, and Hiram began the work in hand by asking me to call the names of three lads who should be left on board the sloops as sentinels, and when I had done as was desired, he said to them, speaking gravely and with the air of one who sees in the future more of danger than he is willing to admit:

"You lads are to keep sharp watch. Do not let your attention be drawn to the shore, for nothing threatens from that quarter; but remain constantly on the alert for approaching vessels. Don't fail to give an alarm the instant you make out a craft bearing to the eastward after passing Morton's point. It may be that the lives of all of us who go ashore will depend on your faithful discharge of duty, therefore act as soldiers should. When you have made certain that any vessel, or boat with a considerable number of men on board, is coming in this direction, discharge one of the muskets, after which make ready to help us on board with whatsoever we may bring."

Then Hiram, together with the remainder of us Minute Boys and the men he had brought with him to work the sloops, went on shore, and at the first farmer's dwelling we came upon I understood that our visit was not unexpected.

Fifty or more sheep were penned in a small enclosure, and John Weston, the owner of the land,

together with his son, were busily engaged putting grain into bags that it might the more readily be transported.

We began our work by stacking arms and setting to at the task of carrying the sheep to the shore, bundling them into the small boats, and then pulling out to the sloops.

Where there were so many laborers the task was soon completed, and then came the more fatiguing portion of the business, meaning the transportation of the grain.

However, we set to it with a will for there was one more farm on Hog island which should be visited, and Hiram, fearing lest we might be interrupted, urged us to our utmost.

The day was warm; the bags of grain far too heavy for easy handling, and in a short time I was so weary that but for Hiram's shouts of encouragement or reproaches, I should have ceased work for a short time of rest.

It was just at the moment when I had made up my mind to declare I could not continue the labor until after having a breathing spell, that the report of a musket rang out on the still air so startlingly that each fellow who had a burden dropped it to look hastily about, and those who were empty-handed, including Hiram, ran with all speed to the shore.

I was among the foremost, and having reached a bend where it was possible to get a fairly good view to the westward, an exclamation of dismay burst involuntarily from my lips as I saw a schooner-rigged craft coming around the westerly end of Noddle island.

"It's bound to be the Britishers!" some one near

me exclaimed, and I replied, speaking somewhat petulantly because of my fears:

"Who else could it be, coming from that quarter? Our people would not despatch a craft of that size after having sent two sloops, and therefore it may be we'll have use for that ammunition 'twixt now and noon."

Hiram had arrived at the shore almost on my heels, and having taken a good look at the oncoming craft cried:

"Now is the time when you must work lively, lads, in order to get all the grain aboard if it be possible! We have a good hour before us, according to the way yonder craft is sailing, and should be able to clean up all that John Weston has made ready for us."

Then, as we lads started on a run for the farmhouse, he shouted to the watchers on deck:

"Don't lose sight of that vessel for an instant, and give the signal when she is come up to yonder small fir tree on Noddle island!"

Having said this he turned about to work as desperately as ever man could, crying out against him who lagged ever so little, and encouraging by words and example those who were putting forth every effort.

I dare venture to say that Farmer Weston's grain was never handled more quickly than on this occasion, and we had all of it aboard, with the exception of mayhap ten bags, when a cry from the shore warned us that the enemy had approached to within the distance set by our leader.

Now it must be borne in mind that all these goods had been put aboard one of the sloops, leaving the other clean, so far as concerned a cargo, and I was

not a little surprised when Hiram gave the word for the four men to go on board the laden vessel to make ready for getting under way. Then we lads were sent into the empty craft, in which was stored the ammunition, and word was given to "up anchor and hoist the canvas."

"Is it a case of running away?" I asked sharply of the leader, who, with half a dozen of the lads, was swaying down on the mainsail, and he replied, speaking with difficulty because of his heavy breathing:

"One of the sloops will try to run away; but it won't be ours."

I now understood full well what was his plan. We were to engage the enemy in a regular battle so that the other sloop, laden with provisions, might succeed in going free. I am willing to confess that despite all my previous longings to show myself worthy of being a soldier, the cold chill of fear began to run up and down my spine, as I realized that the time was come when we must strive to kill while others were doing their best to shed our blood.

I question much, now that I have taken part in other conflicts, whether any one, man or lad, ever looks forward to an action at arms without a certain degree of uneasiness, even of fear. If there had been on board the laden sloop a party of our people whom we were struggling to save, then there would have been something heroic in thus engaging in an unequal struggle to the end that better lives than ours might not be taken. As it was, however, we would be fighting for a lot of sheep and a certain amount of grain, which seemed to me worth-

less in comparison with the life of any one member of the company.

I failed to take heed of the fact that by getting the cargo past the Britishers, thus preserving it for the use of our people, we might be sparing those who had devoted themselves to the Cause much of suffering by way of hunger, and this would be a good and sufficient reason why we should shed our blood.

All this which I have set down passed through my mind as does a flash of lightning across a darkened sky, and meantime we were forging toward the schooner, while the second sloop was being got under way more leisurely, swinging around in such position that we remained between her and the Britishers.

By this time it was possible to see clearly those who stood on the schooner's deck, and, as nearly as I could judge, that mass of red which showed amidships was made up of no less than twenty soldiers, all fully armed, and with the sunlight glistening upon bayonet and buckle until it seemed as if each piece of metal was throwing off a tiny jet of flame.

Nearer and nearer did we draw to this danger, while the other sloop was creeping around to northward, ready to take advantage of the southerly breeze when we had put ourselves into position to prevent pursuit on the part of the Britishers, and in the meanwhile Silas, Harvey and Hiram were bringing ammunition into the cabin, distributing among the Minute Boys a generous supply of powder and balls.

I believe that no more than two hundred yards separated our sloop from the schooner when Hiram

said in a low tone, but one which thrilled me to the marrow:

"If we would aid the Cause, lads, now has come the time when each must stand to his musket without sign of fear, whatever may be in his heart. There is no chance a fight can be avoided, unless so be you are willing to show the white feather by turning tail. Remember that not every British bullet finds its billet, for the king's men are known to be mighty poor marksmen, however soldierly their appearance. When the scrimmage opens, set about the work of shooting down those who have come to oppress us yet more bitterly, as if you were firing at squirrels. Don't waste your shot; but take careful aim. Now let each lad conceal himself as best he may under the rail so that no more than his head and arms be exposed to view."

This little speech heartened me wonderfully, as I know it did many of the other lads, because their faces brightened and they clutched their muskets with a certain show of determination which told that they would do their best to obey the command.

We made our preparations as Hiram had suggested, and were none too soon in gaining the protection of the rail, for before he who was our leader had made any move toward screening himself, a volley of bullets came whistling over our heads.

The aim of the Britishers was poor, for not a missile came within ten feet of the deck, but the jib and mainsail looked like a sieve.

Then I shouted to Hiram that he should obey his own command and get behind the rail.

"Some one must steer the sloop lest we fail of putting her in such a position that our consort may go free. Get to your work since the lobster backs

have opened the game, and let them see what kind of marksmen are the Minute Boys of Boston. Now then, lads, fire as you please so that you take steady aim!"

I believe it was Harvey Pearson who first discharged his musket, and I saw a red-coat reel back, his arm, which had been raised to charge his musket, falling heavily at his side.

Then came our answer to the opening fire, the sharp crackle of musketry seemingly running the whole length of the port rail, and on the instant the compact mass of red was shrunken, with here and there gaps which told that more than one had been stretched upon the deck.

After having emptied my gun, and while recharging it, I turned ever so slightly to look at our consort, which was now edging away to the westward, we having come so far up on the enemy's quarter that he could not have turned in pursuit without running afoul of us.

Now as to what was done in particular during the next ten minutes or more I cannot rightly set down, because so great was my excitement and so intense the fever which had come upon me after the first volley, while the acrid odor of burning powder assailed my nostrils, that I hardly know what I myself did.

I was like unto one in the delirium of fever; it seemed as if there was a red veil before my eyes; I loaded and discharged my musket, taking aim as best I could, rapidly until the barrel of the weapon was so hot that I threw it on the deck, running into the cabin to get from the spare weapons a cool one.

As I came up the companion-way, brushing past Hiram who shouted something in my ear, I know

not what, I was dimly conscious of seeing the laden sloop standing well over on the northern shore, every inch of canvas set and drawing.

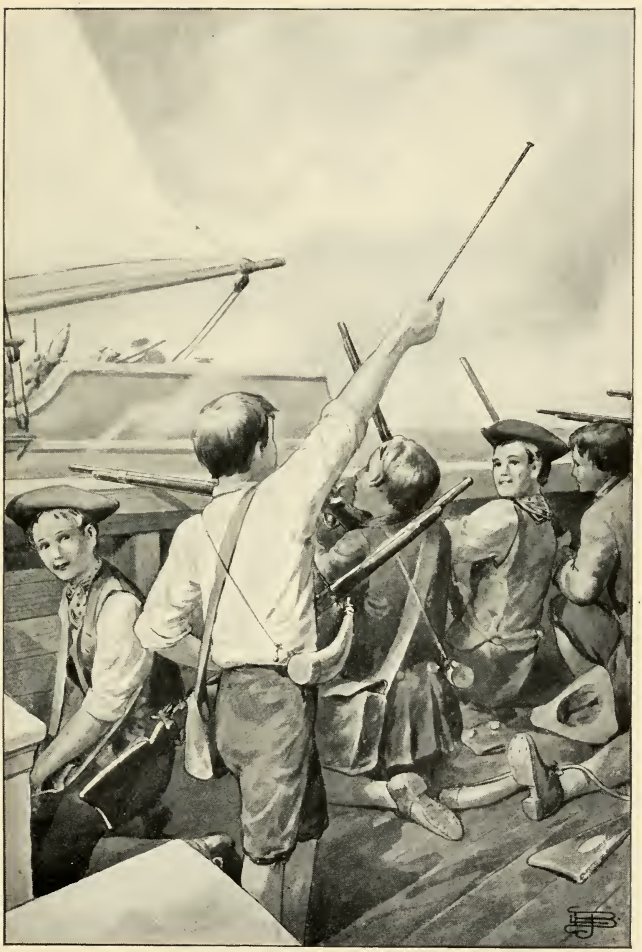
Then I began to charge the weapon, and while so doing glanced involuntarily across the deck, seeing here and there a tiny thread of dull red. On the instant my heart turned cold, for until then I had had no thought that any of our lads were hurt.

"Some of the boys are wounded!" I cried shrilly, turning to Hiram, and then I saw that his left arm hung by his side as if useless, while he held the tiller with his right hand, standing astride it that his legs might aid him in the grip.

"Ay, lad, some of us must pay the price, although I reckon we are making it tolerably expensive for the lobster backs."

It was the first time since the action began that I could see clearly, and glancing across the narrow space of water which separated the two vessels, I saw that the mass of red had dwindled until no more than six or seven lobster backs stood opposed to us, while three sailors were doing whatsoever they could toward wearing ship in order to take to their heels.

It was a sight which filled me with astonishment and pride. That the Minute Boys of Boston, not one of whom was above fifteen years old, had saved for the American army all the provisions that were on board the sloop which was now sailing away to the westward, seemed too good to be true, and, what was absolutely amazing, these same lads had thrashed the king's men, those who had come to the colony for the purpose of whipping us into subjection — thrashed them, until their only desire was to run!



"'WHO SHALL SAY NOW THAT WE HAVEN'T THE RIGHT TO CALL OURSELVES MINUTE BOYS?'"

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I became as wildly delirious with joy and pride as I had been during the turmoil of battle, and, waving the ramrod of the musket above my head, I cried triumphantly to the lads who were still pouring lead into the red-coats:

"Who shall say now that we haven't the right to call ourselves Minute Boys, and to take our stand side by side with the men at Cambridge?"

Half a dozen of the lads cheered wildly, after which they again devoted their attention to the human targets, while Hiram cried as he swung the tiller down, willing now to give the lobster backs a chance to run away:

"You have done your work like little men, and when we gain port my first act will be to ask that I may be permitted to enroll myself among the Minute Boys of Boston, rather than with the company to which I now belong."

Hiram said that "we had done our work," and indeed he was right, for the battle, and truly it may be called such, was over so far as the Britishers were concerned. They were now putting forth every effort to wear ship in order that they might get out of our way, and never one of those fancifully dressed soldiers of the king had fired a shot during the past three minutes.

Had we been blood-thirsty, or, perhaps I may say, had we become hardened to warfare, we might have shot down every last one of them before they could get beyond our line of fire; but we lads did not have the heart to shoot down human beings who were simply struggling to escape, no matter what crime they might have committed against us.

In fact, once the musketry fire had ceased and we were given time to see how much of injury had

been inflicted upon the Minute Boys, I for one lost all stomach for further fighting.

It was sickening to stand where I did well aft, and look along the deck where were four of our fellows lying upon the planks as if lifeless, while as many more had a bandaged arm or leg telling of wounds which did not quench their ardor in the effort to prove themselves worthy of standing against the king's men as defenders of the Cause.

As I have said, Hiram allowed the sloop to come well before the wind, thus giving the schooner's crew an opportunity to put about as they were so eager to do, and finally when she was brought on a course which would carry her past Noddle island to the passage eastward of the Charlestown shore, they clapped on all sail, having had such a bellyful of the medicine dealt out by us Minute Boys as to make them anxious only to get under cover.

Once they were well off, and our consort so far away in the distance that there was no possibility of her being overtaken, even though the lobster backs had sufficient pluck remaining to make the attempt, we lads, wounded as well as sound, sent after them a ringing cheer of triumph. I can well fancy that those soldiers who had counted on grinding us of the colonies into the dust with but little effort, must have felt like hiding their faces for very shame at having been thus soundly whipped by a company of boys who had never until that moment even so much as played at being warriors.

We followed close in the wake of the schooner with scarce sixty yards between us, and then, had we been so blood-thirsty, we might have picked off every man that showed himself on her deck, while they could have inflicted no damage upon us.

Once we had stretched off on a course that would lead us to the mouth of the Mystic or the Charles river, whichever we saw fit to make, Hiram gave up the tiller to Archie, who, like myself, had come off without a scratch, and he and I set about doing whatsoever we could in our ignorant way for the relief of those who were suffering.

My heart grew sick within me when we found two of the poor lads lying on deck still in death; but our first care was necessarily for the living, and we did whatsoever we could in our poor way for the two who were most grievously wounded, after which was made an examination of the lesser injuries.

We Minute Boys had gone into the battle fifteen strong, and, counting Hiram, we had our full number on board the sloop; two of these had gone over into that world of the Beyond; two lay, as it seemed to me, nigh unto death, while five had received what might be called trifling wounds, although I question whether a fellow who suffers from the pain caused by a British bullet through the fleshy part of his arm or leg, would be willing to call the hurt "trifling."

Long though the list was, it must have been small in comparison with what we had done to the lobster backs. From all I had seen, it appeared to me that at least five were put beyond all power of doing harm to us of the colonies, and I dare venture to say that not more than three or four of the entire number escaped without some evidence of our skill as marksmen.

And now, if you will believe me, in the midst of our rejoicing, for we did rejoice even though those two poor lads lay in the bow silent and motionless,

covered with canvas, Hiram broke out with complaint because our work had not been finished, whereupon I asked in amazement and no little anger what he considered the finishing of the task.

"We failed of getting more than one cargo, and there were two to be had on Hog island, as I know full well. But for the fact that we are what you might call short-handed because so many are wounded, I would put about and pick up what laid ready for our hands but for the coming of the lobster backs," he said, much as though sorrowing because we had not been able to do that which an equal number of men would have failed at. "There is a chance that we might take aboard a bit more of meat and grain, with the Westons to help us, even if the second farm does stand two miles from the shore."

Fancying that I read on his face a half-formed determination to return to Hog island that very moment, I cried indignantly:

"The Minute Boys shall not have a hand in anything whatsoever save the running of this sloop, until those who have been wounded are cared for by a surgeon. Go whither you will so they can be set ashore where kindly hands may minister to their hurts; but more than that is not to be done this day."

I truly believe Hiram, glutton though he was in behalf of the Cause, felt more than a little bit ashamed of having suggested that we might accomplish more, for he made no reply to my angry outburst; but continued on with me to look after the injured lads, bathing this wound or giving that sufferer the water which he craved, without heed to his own injury, which was indeed slight.

As a matter of course the schooner, having more canvas than we spread to the breeze, speedily drew away from us; but when she was come to the passage between Charlestown and Noddle island it was a case of standing down against the wind, and as we ran past I had a good view of her deck.

Only five men could I count on their feet, although there might have been sound ones below; but surely it was that they had suffered more than we.

We had no argument as to where it might be best to make a landing, for with the wind due south it would have been little less than folly had we attempted to gain the mouth of the Cambridge river. The Britishers could have sent out guard-boats in sufficient number to board us past all hope of successful resistance on our part, and once that schooner arrived at Boston town with the news of what we Minute Boys had done, our rejoicing must speedily have been changed to wailing.

Venturesome though Hiram Griffin was, he did not even suggest that we do other than take such course as was indicated by the direction of the wind, and we went on past Morton's point, counting to bring the voyage to an end at near about the Penny ferry, where we surely would find housing for our wounded, while those who were sound in body might make their way to the American encampment.

The laden sloop which we had protected at risk of our lives, could be seen far in the distance as we swept on up past Morton's point. She had come to anchor near where I counted we would make land, and from the number of boats plying between her and the shore, it was easy to understand that our people had already begun to take from her that

cargo which had cost the lives of two of the Minute Boys, and the blood of many others.

I wish I might set down here, so that all could realize fully, the sense of satisfaction and of pride which came over me as I saw this token that our work had been well done! I gave no heed, as had Hiram, to the fact that we might have brought more from Hog island, for truly, I said to myself, any person who would set himself as judge of our work must see that we had accomplished all within reason.

Now in truth had come the time when we could present ourselves at Cambridge, and ask with good grace to be considered as part of the American army, for had we not already shown ample proof of our ability to stand up against the king's men, and, what is more, beat them handsomely in fair fight where one would have supposed the odds to be all against us who were unversed in warfare?

Somewhat of the same thought must have been in Archie's mind, for as we two stood side by side well aft, while Hiram was still busying himself ministering to our wounded, he said in a tone of exultation:

"Since yesterday we have come off first best against all that a traitorous comrade could do, and I take no little pride in it, though it did happen by accident and was so close a shave that we were within a hair's breadth of being made prisoners. Put that close shave by the side of what we have done since morning, and then you may say with good reason that we have been of service to the Cause.

CHAPTER IX

ON SPECIAL DUTY

WHEN we were come to the Penny ferry our consort had discharged her cargo, and there were forty or fifty men, I should say, engaged in driving the sheep and transporting the grain out of harm's way, for, save as to a few sentinels, our people had no force stationed at that place.

After some considerable trouble Archie and I succeeded in getting two carts with horses to carry our dead and wounded, for I was determined the bodies of those lads who had given up their lives for the Cause should be carried where they might receive a soldier's burial.

Because we were forced to move slowly on account of the wounded, another day had fully come before we entered the encampment, and I was surprised at finding that all our people there seemed to know as much concerning what had been done near Hog island as did we who had taken part in the action.

The sailors of the sloop which we had aided to escape, were so loud in their praise of what the Minute Boys of Boston had done, and so eager to make every person acquainted with the part we had played, that had we been veritable heroes the reception accorded us could not have been warmer.

Men whom I had never seen before shook me by the hand as if we were friends of long standing, and

had much to say in praise of the past day's work. Doctor Warren seemingly made it his especial business to greet each of us in turn, and repeated again and again that he was not surprised because of our having shown ourselves men, since he knew the day we carried his message to Lexington that we had in us the making of soldiers.

As a matter of course I was proud of being thus received by my elders, but when my father came up hurriedly, taking me in his arms and kissing me on the cheek as if I had been a mere child, truly was my cup of happiness running over!

I tried to belittle the affair, although way down in my heart I believed it was of considerable importance; but he would have none of it, claiming that those who manned the sloop could not have stretched the truth, since the result showed that we must have acted nobly.

Now it can well be fancied that we Minute Boys were considerably puffed up because of all this praise, more particularly when our elders greeted us as equals. My pride and happiness vanished, however, on that sorrowful day when our comrades were buried.

General Ward had issued orders that the lads be committed to the earth with all the ceremony of a military funeral, and we Minute Boys who were able to march, acted as guard of honor. It was all very imposing; but at the same time solemn, and my heart grew chill with fear as to the future, when I realized that it was more than probable others of our company would give up their lives before we had won out in this fight against the king.

During four or five days after the funeral our company of Minute Boys remained within the en-

campment, for by this time we were come to be considered a portion of the army, or, a better way of putting it would be, that our elders recognized us as being worthy of being called soldiers, and meanwhile Hiram's wound was healed.

Many, many times during every twenty-four hours did we discuss the question of going back to Boston town, the greater number of us believing that we could do better work as spies than by loitering around the camp, where were so many idle ones.

As a matter of fact we did not, even in our warmest discussions, consider for a moment that Archie would be warranted in returning, and all of us understood that most like our names were down in General Gage's black books, for it was reasonable to suppose that Seth Jepson had given to the enemy all information concerning us that was possible.

It was true we might walk the streets of Boston without being recognized by the lobster backs, even though the hue and cry had been raised, but should we by accident come upon Seth Jepson, Amos Nelson, or any of that kidney, then was it certain they would compass our arrest.

However, despite all the dangers which might attend our entering the town, Silas and I were hankering to make the attempt. Hiram would give us no advice either way, claiming that until the wound in his arm had fully healed, or, in other words, meaning while he was not in condition to perform a soldier's duty he would take no part in recommending others to risk their necks.

I pressed him to know whether, if he was in fit bodily condition, he would advocate going into Boston on the chance of being able to learn some-

thing that might be of importance to our people; but he evaded a direct answer by saying:

"All that is as may be. Should it happen that the lobster backs began to nestle around like a hive of bees making ready to swarm, then it might be I should say we had best go; but just at present there is nothing to show that you could learn more than may be picked up by any of our friends in town."

Then it was I appealed to Doctor Warren, telling him we Minute Boys were eager to be up and doing, and that it seemed as if we might be of assistance as spies; but he cut short the conversation by saying in what sounded to me like an odd tone:

"There'll soon be ample work near here, and I see no reason why you lads should be so venturesome when there is little call for anything of the kind."

It is needless to say that I abandoned the idea of going immediately among the lobster backs, for Doctor Warren's opinion had great weight with me, and he had spoken so positively against it that I set about trying to make myself content with the idle life we were leading.

It was soon proven that I was to get my fill of right down hard work, together with more of danger than the most gluttonous swashbuckler could have mapped out.

I think it was the second, or it might have been the third, day after my conversation with Doctor Warren, when Hiram Griffin sought me out where Silas and I lay on our backs in the college yard, sunning ourselves as do chickens. There was an

expression of wisdom on his face, as if he knew more than he intended to impart, when he said to me:

"Lad, do you know Colonel Prescott of the Pepperell Minute Men?"

"You yourself pointed him out to me not long ago," I replied lazily.

"Do you know where his headquarters are?"

"With his men, I reckon. One of them acted as sailor aboard the sloop that carried the live stock and grain from Hog island, and you can get from him what information you need concerning the colonel."

"It's not information I'm after, lad. You, as captain of the Minute Boys of Boston, are ordered to report to Colonel Prescott."

"For duty?" I cried excitedly.

"Well, I reckon it may be something of the kind, for it don't stand to reason that such a man as Colonel Prescott sends out orders for a lad like you to report, if he simply wants an every-day bit of gossip."

"Come on, Silas! If there's a chance for us Minute Boys to have a finger in any pie that is baking, don't let's linger here!"

"Silas best stay where he is," Hiram said, and there was a look of disappointment on the lad's face, for he was no less eager than I to be doing something against the lobster backs, and most like burned with impatience to know what Colonel Prescott might have in hand for us.

I had but little difficulty in finding the officer who had sent for me, and he did not keep me in suspense many minutes.

"How many lads in your company are fit for duty now?" he asked immediately I stepped before him.

"Eleven, sir, I believe — twelve if Hiram Griffin calls himself one of us and can use his arm."

"Muster your company in front of General Ward's headquarters an hour before sunset, taking care to provide yourselves with blankets and one day's rations."

Having given this command he turned to speak with an officer who was standing nearby, and seemingly gave no more heed to me, yet I stood like a simple, rather than one who claimed to be a soldier, awaiting further information, until mayhap five full minutes had passed when I came to realize my stupidity. Then saluting, even though his back was turned toward me, I went out and ran with all speed to where I had left Silas and Hiram.

They were awaiting me patiently, evidently counting on my coming directly back, and once I was within speaking distance Hiram asked laughingly:

"Well, did the colonel send for you that he might learn whether the Minute Boys had any complaint to make regarding their quarters or their rations?"

"We are ordered to assemble in front of General Ward's headquarters an hour before sunset!" I replied breathlessly, giving no heed to his banter.

"Then there is some work to be done!" Silas cried joyfully.

"It must be so since we are to provide ourselves with blankets and a day's ration."

"I'm thinking that Colonel Prescott would have been wiser had he forgotten the blankets and ordered more food," Hiram said with an odd ex-

pression on his face, and I taxed him with knowing more regarding the purpose for which we were to assemble than he had told us.

"Nay, lad, whatever may be in my head is only suspicion, aroused by a word here and a word there dropped by some of our officers. You know I always hold that a man should gather all the information he can when there is nothing else to be done. I've had my ears opened mighty wide since knowing the Committee of Safety held a secret session not long ago, and from that time out it strikes me there have been many conversations between our commanders."

"Tell us what you suspect," Silas demanded, and Hiram shook his head with the air of one who has come to an end of his budget of news.

"It is only that we are to make some important move mighty soon, and more than that I am in the dark. You can set it down as a fact, however, that this ordering of the Minute Boys to be ready for what looks like special duty, goes to prove that our people are aiming to give General Gage a black eye inside of a short time."

We speculated upon what might be in the wind, during ten minutes or more without coming to any satisfactory conclusion, and then I realized it was my duty to make the other lads acquainted with the orders of the day, so far as they concerned us, therefore I hastened away in order to find them, for my Minute Boys were prone to scatter all over the encampment, instead of remaining in any one particular place.

There is little reason why I should waste words in trying to repeat all that we said regarding this special duty, or in striving to describe the joy which

was felt by all because of our having been ordered to report, thus showing that we were considered as a portion of the army.

It may readily be understood that at the appointed time we Minute Boys were drawn up in line facing General Ward's headquarters, and within the next fifteen minutes no less than a thousand men filed into the Common in our rear.

When we had been there nearly an hour, during which time I could hear those directly behind me striving in vain to hit upon the duty which was to be performed, General Ward, Colonel Prescott, and mayhap a dozen other officers, came out of headquarters, and with them was Parson Langdon, he who, as I afterward learned, was the president of the college.

While we stood at attention the clergyman prayed long and devoutly, thus proving to my mind, at least, that we were to be engaged in a service of great danger and much importance.

After the prayer had been ended there was no little delay caused by a conference of the officers, who seemed to be at loggerheads about something, and it was near to nine of the clock before the order was given for us to march. By this time night had come, and in order that we might not go astray, Colonel Prescott himself, with two sergeants carrying dark lanterns which were opened toward the rear, led the way.

Now although Hiram Griffin had claimed that his wound was still troubling him, he fell into line with us when we marched down to headquarters, declaring that it was his right so to do since he considered himself as belonging to the Minute Boys rather than any other organization.

When I would have argued that none but the able-bodied were called for, he insisted it was possible for him to do as good service as any other of the company, and refused to give way despite all our urging.

Therefore it was that when we set out on the march in columns of four he walked by my side. Next him was Archie, and then Silas. Thus we had an opportunity for conversation, provided our voices were not pitched too high, for orders had been given that we refrain from making a noise, and when Colonel Prescott and the two sergeants took the lead with their lanterns, Hiram said in a low tone to me as if it was a matter that gave him greatest pleasure:

"I'm beginning to think this movement is of more importance than I fancied. You may be certain something of moment is afoot, for a thousand or more armed men are not sent out under cover of darkness unless for a weighty reason, but what that may be beats me."

It was idle for us to speculate as to the future, and yet we did throughout that march of nearly three hours, although we failed to succeed in convincing ourselves upon any one point until we were come to Charlestown Neck. There we found drawn up by the side of the road, wagon after wagon filled with spades, pick-axes and such like tools, whereupon Hiram cried suddenly:

"I'm not claiming to be any great shakes of a soldier; but he must be a blind man who could not see that our business this night is to throw up intrenchments at some place, and where should that be, considering the road we have come, if not in Charlestown?"

Again did it appear as if our officers were not fully decided upon what should be done, for Colonel Gridley and Colonel Prescott, together with a number of captains, consulted a long time, while we remained in line near the wagons.

Then we were ordered forward again, nor did that portion of the command which our Minute Boys followed halt until we were come to a hill in Charlestown, mostly of pasture land, lying about an hundred and thirty rods southeast of Bunker hill, where all hands were speedily set to work with spades and pick-axes throwing up the earth to form breastworks according to instructions given by Colonel Gridley.

We Minute Boys could handle pick-axe or shovel as well as any man, and I'll answer for all that they labored most industriously once the work was laid out for them.

"If we were hankering for danger, truly we are getting all that is needed," Archie whispered to me as we stood side by side throwing up the mound of earth which was to protect our people against the onslaught of the Britishers. "It seems as if we were close upon the lobster backs, for more than once have I heard the cries of their sentinels, and unless the king's ships have changed anchorage since I was last in Boston town, then they must be near to this shore."

Our officers understood as well as did Archie or I, how much of danger there was in our thus working under the very noses of the enemy, for, when not wielding the pick or shovel, they were walking around among the men cautioning them against making any noise save that which was absolutely necessary, until I came to believe there was even

more of peril in this undertaking than the lads of our company had fancied.

The dullest among us could well understand that what was being done must be finished before daybreak, or else left uncompleted, for it went without saying that as soon as the Britishers got a glimpse of us, there would be lively times. We worked like beavers with that thought in mind, for now it was certain we had been sent to make ready for the coming of those who were to hold that which we had built, and negligence on our part might cost the lives of many.

There was little wonder Parson Langdon had prayed so fervently, for he must have known we were going down into the very jaws of the lion, risking our lives an hundred times over, and yet there were many of our people in the secret who believed it would be impossible for us to do all that we did.

Now I am minded to set down what I afterward learned regarding that night's work, and put it in proper words as told me by another, for I am not sufficiently well versed in warfare to be able to describe so important a thing in my own language.

You must first understand that the easterly and westerly sides of this hill on which we worked, were very steep. On the easterly side, and near the foot, were brick kilns, clay pits, and much marshy land, while on the westerly side was the more central portion of the town itself.

The redoubt which we built was eight rods square, with the eastern side bordering a large field or stretch of pasture. On the northern side was an open passageway, and the breastworks on the easterly side extended about one hundred yards

northward. The trench we did not have time to finish. Between the south end of the breastwork and the redoubt was a sally-port, and on the inside of the parapet were steps of wood and earth on which, during an action, men might mount and discharge their weapons.

Now even though you may not be versed in warfare, you must realize that for a thousand men to throw up such a fortification as I have described, between midnight and daybreak, which came about four of the clock, was a wonderful piece of work, and in addition to all this two strong fences made of stones and rails had been built either side of the entire works, thus forming a fairly good obstacle in case an enemy attempted to make an attack elsewhere than directly in front. In the rear was the sharp slope of the hill up which soldiers could not well make their way.

When the day broke we were all working at our best speed, giving no heed to fatigue because by this time every man jack among us had come to understand the importance of the labor. Then it was the lobster backs gave the first warning that they had discovered what we were about.

His majesty's ship *Lively,* which was lying at anchor midway between the ferry and Morton's point, suddenly opened fire with her great guns, and upon the instant we dropped our intrenching tools, standing erect as if expecting to be attacked immediately; but straightway I heard Colonel Prescott cry out:

"Keep to your work, lads, that ship can do no harm to us, and before the red-coats have got their wits fully about them we can strengthen these defenses amazingly!"

As a matter of fact the missiles from the ship were passing directly over us as we worked within the intrenchment, and after I had heard two or three balls sail across with an ominous whistling, I gave no more heed than if they had been so many locusts singing in the air.

Reeking with perspiration, aching in every joint, and knowing full well that within a short time we would have all the king's men striving to dislodge us, we Minute Boys did our portion of the work with the men, and it gave me no little pride to see that never one of them shirked, although here and there I could see great hulking farmers throw themselves upon the ground as if it was impossible to remain longer standing.

I believe Hiram did more to hearten and help us, than did the knowledge of all that depended on this labor of our hands.

He ever had a cheery word; was always on the lookout to aid this lad or that who might be struggling with some weight beyond his strength, and all the while continued to picture what we would do with General Gage's lobster backs before another sun had set.

Some among us ate as we worked, taking a bite of corn bread now, and a bit of bacon then, as they stopped to regain their breath; but others, like myself, waited until the task should be completed, believing then we would have a breathing spell. As the day grew older we who had rations at hand forgot our hunger as we gazed across to Boston town where it was possible to see the people gathering, most like in amazement at what had been done, until it was as if that portion of the water-front facing us was crowded with human beings.

"I'm wondering if Seth Jepson is among that gang," Archie said grimly as he and I wasted twenty precious seconds or more gazing at the throngs.

"If he is I'm thinking it doesn't do his heart any good to know how thoroughly we have outwitted the Britishers," I replied gleefully. "It's almost certain there will be a battle soon, and most like that cur comes no nearer than the shore of the town; but let him stick ever so close to his red-coated friends, the day must dawn when we Minute Boys will have a chance to pay the debt we owe him."

"That is if so be we live long enough," Silas suggested, and for the instant I fancied it possible to detect a tremor in his voice. "Instead of watching yonder curious ones who can do nothing for nor against us, look around at the king's ships, and see what a force General Gage has got behind him when he sends the lobster backs to shoot us down."

Now, strange though it may seem, while saying to myself that before many hours had passed the red-coats would be upon us, I had failed to consider, even for a moment, how much of strength the enemy had; I had given no thought to the thousands upon thousands of men who could be sent across from Boston to over-run the hill we were fortifying.

Directly in front of our intrenchments was, as I have already said, the *Lively,* a ship of twenty guns, and, as I afterward learned, carrying an hundred and thirty men; northward, over away somewhere opposite the brick kilns, was the *Falcon,* which must have been as heavily manned as the *Lively;* nearly abreast of the town hall was the *Somerset,* of sixty-eight guns, and having on board five hundred and twenty men, then came the *Cerberus* of thirty-six

guns; the *Glasgow,* twenty-four guns, and the transport *Symetry.*

Taking it all in all, as nearly as a landsman like me could figure it, there must have been among that shipping of his majesty's no less than one hundred and eighty-six guns, with somewhere about twelve to thirteen hundred men. In addition to these, General Gage could transport anywhere from five to eight thousand men, landing them upon Charlestown shore close under our noses.

Now as all this came to my mind, with the proof so distinctly before me, I am not ashamed to say that for the moment I grew timorous, believing the time was near at hand when I should fall as had fallen those two brave comrades of ours in the engagement off Hog island, and, let him laugh who will, there came into my heart a feeling of regret because I could not hope to be laid away in Mother Earth as they had been.

Those aboard the *Lively* must have understood that her shots were doing no damage, for after twenty minutes or more the cannonading ceased; but we continued strengthening the defense, for, as Hiram said:

"If the Britishers are fools enough to give us a chance to do as we will, it's a case of buckling to it the best we know how."

"That's what we have been doing since midnight," Archie replied grimly, "and while there is no thought of complaining in my mind, I'd almost welcome the coming of the enemy, since it would give us good excuse for throwing down these pick-axes and shovels."

"If General Gage knows on which side his bread

is buttered, the lobster backs will soon be upon us," Hiram cried as if exulting in such a possibility. "I fail to understand why two or three thousand of their fancy red-coated, overly-drilled men have not been sent already to stir us up."

"It may be the king's governor is so kindly-hearted that he means to give us every opportunity to make ready for his coming," Silas suggested.

Then one lad had some bantering word, or another pictured what the Tories might be doing and thinking, while a third proposed that the enemy would wait before attacking, until reinforcements could come from England, and so the time went on with many a quip and jest; but no cessation of the work until about an hour and a half after daybreak, when the British battery of six guns on Copp's hill opened upon us as if beginning the battle.

These last missiles were like to do us more harm than had those from the *Lively,* for the iron balls came among us far too plentifully, and altogether too near at times, to be pleasing to those among us whose hearts were inclined to be faint, and I question much whether all our people would have remained at work during such a cannonading but for the fact that Colonel Prescott showed himself here and there, regarding not the danger in order to encourage and prevent the least show of retreating.

When he cried out that that which we failed of doing might cost the life of many a good man, or as he shouted that every spadeful of earth thrown up was accomplishing just so much toward protecting those who were devoting themselves to the colony, from the hirelings of the king, we forgot that our hands were torn and blistered, that our joints ached

with fatigue, or that our backs had been bent until near to the breaking point — forgot all save that we must put forth every effort in making ready for this real measuring of strength between well-armed soldiers of his majesty's and "rebels," who had whatsoever in the way of weapons could be picked up at home, with no uniforms and but little knowledge of military drill.

I cannot say when we first became aware that troops were being made ready for transportation across from Boston. As the day wore on and nothing was heard from General Gage, save now and then a shot from the *Lively,* or the random firing from the guns on Copp's hill, it seemed much as if the king's governor was afraid to attack us, even despite the fact that his force outnumbered us eight or ten to one, and when noon came we were nearly at the end of our work with pick and shovel.

Then it was possible to hear the beating of drums in Boston; the rumble of artillery trains, or even the cries of the mob in the streets. We could see dragoons galloping here and there as if carrying orders; then came the marching and counter-marching of troops, and finally the ringing of church bells. It was when this last noise struck upon our ears that Hiram said with a laugh:

"It must be that General Gage counts on calling out all the old women and children, else why should the bells be ringing as if there was a fire?"

"It is the firing on Copp's hill they are ringing for, and if so be the people would gather there to quench it, I should feel less need to duck my head now and then, for truly I find it impossible to stand straight when a bullet comes near my ears," Archie cried cheerily.

It was astonishing that we had been permitted by the enemy to do so much, for, as I have already said, we had completed the fortification with the exception of the trench, while during the forenoon much had been done toward strengthening the fences on either side, putting up additional steps of wood and earth so that men might mount to discharge their weapons, and in nearly every portion of the work the breastworks were raised six feet high.

Two or three times during the forenoon did I see officers sent away on the road over which we had come, and on calling Hiram's attention to the fact, when Major Brooks set off at full speed, was more than surprised to learn that he believed Colonel Prescott was sending for reinforcements.

"Reinforcements!" I cried in dismay. "Are we who have walked or worked all night supposed to be the army that shall defend this fortification? After laboring with pick and shovel since midnight, is there one among us able to do the duty of a soldier during a battle?"

"That's yet to be seen," Hiram replied. "It is a fact in my mind that we were not only sent here to build this fortification, but to hold it, and now when it is to be attacked, as can be seen from the movements in Boston, and he believes the lobster backs will come upon us in great numbers, our colonel is asking for assistance."

"And why should not all the troops in Cambridge be sent here?" I asked petulantly.

"Well, there are many good reasons, my lad. That place is to be held, even if we are driven out of here, and a sufficient number of men are bound to stay there lest the enemy, making believe attack us, turn about the other way and disperse our army.

Every point which we now occupy on yonder shore must be held by men enough to resist any ordinary force, and what becomes of us is of little moment as compared with the need of keeping the Britishers shut up in Boston town, as in fact they are now, save that they may come across here for the sake of killing a few rebels."

Hiram's explanation was not so plain that I could understand fully why we had been sent to throw up intrenchments simply that they might prove to be our grave, and for the moment I gave way to anger, even charging General Ward and those around him with having needlessly sacrificed our lives.

At high noon, and while I was still ranting like the stupid I have ever shown myself to be, word was given for us to cease work and partake of such rations as we had. This command went far toward restoring me to a more decent frame of mind.

I was needing water more than food, and the cask which had been set near where the Minute Boys were working having been emptied, I went further to the rear in search of something to quench my thirst. Then it was I found that the last two casks of water had been knocked to splinters by random shots from one of the vessels, and, so far as I could learn, there was no more that could be come at by us who were in the intrenchments, which was a bad outlook if so be we were called upon to fight.

When we ceased work the flag of New England was hoisted over the redoubt. The intrenching tools which we had been using were sent across to Bunker hill where, as I was afterward told, a few hundred men, who had just come over from Medford, were set at work throwing up another breastwork under command of General Putnam.

While we munched our corn bread, wishing in vain for something with which to wash it down, my comrades and I watched the lobster backs as they were embarked in barges, some from Long wharf, and some from the North battery, making such a scene of warlike array as I had never before witnessed.

Even though they were our enemies, it was a glorious sight to see the precision with which detachment after detachment came up, took their places in the boats, and remained motionless as statues while the oarsmen pulled them across, heading for Morton's point, as it seemed to me.

Now the cannons from the *Lively* and the *Falcon* began to belch forth flame and iron missiles, sweeping all that plain between our redoubt and the water as if to prevent us from making any attempt at opposing the landing.

Had General Gage, or whosoever gave the orders for the vessels of war to open fire, known how weary, how thirsty and nearly exhausted we were, their powder and balls might well have been saved, for I question if even Colonel Prescott, warrior though he was, or Doctor Warren, whom I had not seen until just before noon, would have given the word for us to charge in the hope of checking that advance of well-trained soldiers, or to prevent them from stepping foot on shore.

"How many men think you are in yonder barges?" I heard Silas ask Hiram, and he replied with never a tremor in his voice:

"Nigh about three thousand, lad, and if they don't make us wish for water 'twixt now and night I'll agree never to satisfy my thirst again."

CHAPTER X

ON BREED'S HILL

It was somewhere near about this time when our numbers were slightly increased by the arrival of a portion of Colonel Stark's regiment, and I verily believe that the coming of those men did more to dishearten us than if they had stayed away. After having had sight of such a small force, a few of the faint-hearted cried out in anger, declaring we were to be left to our fate, or that some one had blundered in sending us where there could be no question but that an assault would be provoked.

Hiram allowed no one to say aught against our leaders in his hearing. He aroused us all by calling this man a coward, and accusing another of showing the white feather, when any grumbling was indulged in, fairly shaming the timorous one into silence by declaring that he who raised his voice in protest against embracing the first opportunity to measure strength with the Britishers, despite the fact that the odds were greatly against us, was an enemy to the Cause. He even went so far as to declare, although he had no knowledge regarding it whatsoever, that heavy reinforcements were already on the way from Cambridge.

Just at that time I was giving more heed to the spectacle before me, than to the great disparity in numbers between the Britishers and ourselves. The barges laden with red-coated men, who stood or sat

immovable as statues with the sunlight glinting on their accouterments like tiny flashes of lightning, came on steadily. The oarsmen worked with the greatest precision, while the *Lively* and the *Falcon* swept with iron hail all that tract of land between Breed's hill and the point.

It was a wondrous sight, the landing of those troops at Morton's point. Even though they were enemies, and were come to grind us yet further into the dust, I could not but admire the military exactness with which they disembarked and moved in heavy lines straight up on what we sometimes called Morton's hill, as if the whole force was one gigantic piece of machinery instead of being formed of human atoms.

General Howe was in command of the Britishers, as we afterward learned, and he acted as if intending to take matters in the most leisurely way possible, for after all the troops had arrived and ascended the hill, huge tubs containing punch made from spirits, and baskets seemingly filled to repletion with food, were brought ashore from the barges, while we who were thirsty and hungry could look down upon those red-coated men as they were allowed to stretch themselves at ease upon the ground, eating and drinking at their pleasure.

The sight was one well calculated to cause us greater desire for food and drink than before, if indeed that could be possible, and for a time I believed General Howe had done this for no other purpose than to tantalize us, thus showing how different was the care taken of those hired men who served the king only for the money to be gotten thereby, and us who were struggling to free our land.

Afterward I came to learn that the reason for the

long halt on Morton's hill was that the troops had brought with them cannon balls too large to be used in their pieces, and the delay in making an attack was enforced that this mistake might be rectified by sending to Boston for what was needed.

By the time the lobster backs had come to an end of their sumptuous dinner, we on Breed's hill were heartened by seeing the remainder of Colonel Stark's regiment and all of Reed's corps coming forward on the double quick, and then those grumblers who had declared we had been sent to this place that we might be sacrificed, were forced to hold their peace, for the dullest among them must have understood that General Ward had sent to us all the men that could safely be spared from the posts nearabout.

"How many think you we shall number after yonder troops come up?" I asked of Hiram, and he put the figure at about three thousand. I have since seen it set down that the whole number of our people, including those who came to cover the retreat, did not exceed four thousand.

I felt better in mind after Hiram had replied to my question, believing that we would be somewhere near even in point of numbers; but within ten minutes that sense of security had vanished, for I saw yet another fleet of barges coming out from Boston town laden with infantry, marines, and grenadiers.

Hiram could not but note the look of dismay which came over the faces of the Minute Boys on seeing these reinforcements, for he said laughingly, as if the whole matter was a gigantic joke:

"General Howe must indeed be a prudent man. The king's governor has said that a British soldier is the equal of five such rag-tag as makes up our

army, and yet he doesn't deem it wise to come toward us until his army is increased by two thousand or more. Let us say there are five thousand lobster backs yonder and on the water, yet 'twixt now and nightfall we shall show them that little more than half the number of our people can play hob with the whole blooming outfit."

Then he fell to whistling Yankee Doodle, that tune which the Britishers had set for the purpose of making sport of our people, and it was well he took it up just then, for more than once during the battle which followed did I hear our fifers and drummers screaming and beating out those notes of derision, as if to tell the red-coated hirelings that Yankee Doodle had indeed come to town, and come to stay even longer than might be pleasant.

The British reinforcements arrived at Madlin's ship-yard, some of them remaining on the shore at the point of disembarkation, and others marching to join those on Morton's hill.

Now truly did it seem as if the prudent General Howe had made all his arrangements for wiping us off the face of the earth, and yet he lingered like the small boy that stands naked on the brink of a stream of icy water, knowing he must plunge in sooner or later, but dreading woefully to do so.

All of us who had worked during the night, and a considerable number of those who had just come up, were ordered to take post within the redoubt, and it cheered me wondrously to see with Colonel Prescott, Doctor Warren, that kindly gentleman who never passed a lad without a friendly smile or word, and who had many for us Minute Boys as we filed in striving to look as much like soldiers as possible.

As nearly as I can now remember, our two artillery

companies were between the breastwork and the rail fence on the eastern side, and a small number of men lined the cartway on the right of the redoubt. The Connecticut and the New Hampshire men were at the rail fence on the west side of the redoubt, and there were two or three companies drawn up on the main street at the base of our hill.

Now up to this point I can speak with considerable of certainty, having Hiram at my elbow to point out this movement or that; but once we were fronting the Britishers, and the fumes of burning powder assailed my nostrils, I lost all knowledge of what was being done save immediately around me, and there were times, when the fight grew hottest, that I could not for the life of me have told you what I did or said.

This much I must set down in justice to our Minute Boys of Boston: It was not a cheerful position even for tried soldiers to be in, this seeing the flower of the king's troops marching up the hill, well fed and well armed, outnumbering us two to one, while we who had never even seen warfare, hungry and thirsty to such point that our tongues were parched dry, and with but a scanty supply of ammunition, stood behind our breastworks awaiting what surely seemed must be little less than a slaughter of us all who loved the Cause.

I dare venture to say that every fellow in my company understood full well all the danger that menaced, and yet not one of them flinched; each lad did a man's full duty, and performed, I might say, more than is demanded of a soldier.

It was near to three of the clock in the afternoon before General Gage was ready to wipe us out. Then we saw those long lines of red moving steadily

forward, and my heart leaped within me when our fifers blew all their breath into the tune of Yankee Doodle, while an hundred or more of us sang that song which the Britishers had written as a cheap way of showing their contempt for those people who had been loyal to the king until he and his ministers, by cruel oppression, drove them to this so-called rebellion.

"Don't fire until they are within seven or eight rods," I heard officer after officer caution us as we stood there with muskets ready for that oncoming line of red. "When you can see the whites of their eyes, aim at their waistbands, and remember that the finest coats cover the commanders, who it were better to pick off than if you shot half a dozen men."

Again and again was that command repeated, and even while it was being dinned into our ears so emphatically, Doctor Warren, seeming to think we Minute Boys might show the white feather, came up to us as we stood where we could peer over the breastwork, and said:

"Steady, lads, it is not the number that counts, but the spirit. Remember that every British bullet does not find its billet; but see to it that all of yours strike the target. You lads smelled burning powder off Hog island when the odds against you were greater than they are now, and came off victorious, as you will this day if you hold true to your training."

"Never fear, doctor, but that the lads will give a good account of themselves!" Hiram cried in a cheery tone. "A little bit of red acts on them much the same as it does on a bull, and the Minute Boys won't be the first to turn tail, that I promise you."

"There is no need of a promise, my lad. I know

it full well; but between now and when you open fire is a vexing time, during which many a good man has lost his head, therefore have a care just at this moment."

Now despite all the warnings that had been given, there were some in the redoubt who could not stand inactive while those lines of red were coming so steadily upon us, and I know full well how the men who disobeyed the command must have felt, for it was only by the greatest exercise of my will that I could prevent myself from pulling the trigger as I stood there, peering over the intrenchments, my musket leveled full at a fellow who had seemingly more of gold lace than cloth in his uniform.

The Britishers were well within gunshot when three or four men at my right, overcome most like by nervous excitement, discharged their weapons.

Then it was that Colonel Prescott, leaping from the platform on which he had been standing, cried out that he would shoot the first man who fired before word was given, and at the same moment Colonel Robinson ran around the top of the works knocking up the leveled muskets so that we might not be tempted to fire.

It seemed as if we were wasting time in allowing the enemy to come so near before giving them a taste of our quality; but because of the rating which Colonel Prescott had given those who offended, I no longer had any desire save to await the word of command.

Steadily but surely the red-coated lines advanced until it was as if they would literally over-run us while we remained inactive. I had again leveled my musket at the man who wore such a plentiful supply of gold lace, and it seemed to me as if he was

no more than two yards away, although as a matter of course the distance was much greater, when Colonel Prescott shouted:

"Fire! my men, take aim and fire!"

Never before nor since have I seen such effective results. It seemed to me as if whole squads went down. There were great gaps in the line through which I could see as far as Morton's point, and the grass was strewn with blotches of red until it was like as if a carpet of crimson had suddenly been thrown over it.

Immediately our muskets were discharged we reloaded, firing whensoever we could, and by this time such of the Britishers as were yet on their feet answered us with a volley that did little or no execution, because of being aimed over our heads.

There was the rattle of musketry close about us; the heavy booming of cannon from the king's ships, and from the guns General Howe had brought with him. It was as if all the shore of Boston town had suddenly been lined with great guns belching forth fire and shot, while the smoke settled down over us and over those scattered ranks in front of the intrenchments, parching our throats and burning our eyes until we could no longer see anything before us.

Then it was that the fever of battle took possession of us; I was conscious only of loading and discharging my musket as rapidly as possible. Now and then shrieks of agony came to my ears, mingled with the volleys of great guns and the rattle of small arms, which seemed only a natural accompaniment to the din, and to the blood-thirstiness which assails one at such times.

Once I understood, as if looking down upon two figures with whom I had no connection, that Archie

was speaking; but I neither heard the words nor made any answer, and could not tell whether he turned away, or remained there talking, when suddenly a great shout went up, and everywhere around me men were crying:

"The lobster backs have turned tail! They have got all of Yankee Doodle they needed!"

Our people cheered wildly. Some even threw down their weapons to dance about as do children, and, coming fairly to my senses, I leaned over the breastwork seeing, as the smoke cleared away, those men who had so lately come up to over-run us, fleeing like frightened sheep, leaving behind them here and there squads of dead or wounded comrades, some of whom shrieked with pain, and others, striving to follow in the retreat, crawling on hands and knees, dragging after them shattered limbs, staining the grass with crimson, until one could almost fancy that even amid the fumes of powder it was possible to detect that acrid odor which comes from blood.

In my delirium it was as if I had lived a whole life-time fighting, struggling to force back those soldiers of the king who fought only for the wage they received, caring naught for the righteousness of their cause, and yet, as I was told, we had not been at the work above ten minutes.

Ten minutes! and in that time we had forced back full twice our number! We, the rag-tag of the colonies, had in fair fight against great odds beaten all the men they had sent to slay us, and this in the face of that furious fire from ships, and from the batteries in town!

While I stood there craning my neck to view the results of our own blood-thirstiness, I gave heed

only to the victory which we had won, never thinking what might be the cost until Hiram plucked me from behind, and, turning, I saw lying here and there within the redoubt one and another of our people writhing in pain, or lying stark and still in death.

Strange though it may seem, until that moment I had not believed our friends might have suffered. In my foolishness I fancied, if indeed I gave it a thought, that we had come out from that storm of lead without a scratch, and all my exultation vanished beneath a chill that was like unto fear.

"How many of our poor fellows have been cut down?" I cried, and there must have been in my voice that which told Hiram I was near to showing the white feather, for he shouted harshly, and as if in anger:

"It's no affair of yours, Luke Wright, how many have paid for the love they bear the colonies! The battle is but just begun, and many another among us will follow them before the day has come to a close!"

"But just begun?" I repeated stupidly. "We have whipped them, Hiram! Look yonder, not a man remains on the hill who can run or crawl about."

"Don't flatter yourself as to that. These men who have been hired to take the chances of death will be forced back upon us. Look yonder," and he pointed toward Boston town. "One, two, three, four, five barges, and filled with marines, if so be I can make out the color they wear after all the glare of red that has been before my eyes. Howe has called for yet more reinforcements! The coward dares not meet us again two to one; but must make the odds yet greater!"

I do not understand how it was; but when Hiram thus pointed out to me that which, under other circumstances, would have made my heart more cowardly, it was as if all my waning courage came back to me, and instead of shrinking on seeing the shattered lines reformed for assault, I was eager to have them come, gluttonous to have more share in the cutting down of those who counted on killing us of the colony.

After taking my station on the platform I suddenly bethought myself of Archie and Silas, and turning, failed to see but two of our Minute Boys near at hand.

"Where have they gone?" I cried, fearing more than I ever feared aught on this earth, that they had run away.

"Look over the intrenchment nearby where those red-coats are lying, and you will see not only the Minute Boys, but many a man," Hiram shouted.

When I did as he told me, I saw mayhap fifty of our people searching the bodies of the dead lobster backs for powder and balls in order that their own scanty store might be replenished. I also saw one of our men raise a Britisher's canteen to his lips and drink, and then all my desire for water came once more, until it seemed as if my tongue was like a dry stick clicking against the roof of my mouth.

Perspiration was streaming down my face and from my hands, and in my desire for moisture I scraped it from my cheek, finding it hot and salty, causing soreness of the tongue and a certain nausea of the stomach.

Then there was no longer any opportunity for me to consider my own desires or suffering. The marines in the barges had landed, and forming in line

with those ranks of red, were advancing once more, this time, as I understood full well, with greater fury than at the first assault because of having the deaths of their comrades to avenge.

At this moment the cannonading from the ships seemed to be redoubled, and I could see thrown from the guns on Copp's hill great pieces of something, larger than three or four cannon balls together, which fell among the houses in the town, and, bursting open, set fire in all directions until it seemed to me that every building on the main street was in flames, while the smoke drifted over our fortification until it shut out from view even the enemy.

"Stand by your muskets, lads; this is but a trick to prevent us from seeing what the troops are doing!" some one shouted, and just then, as if God himself was aiding us of the colonies, the first breeze of wind I had felt that day came up from the west, sweeping away the smoke until we could see line after line of the Britishers marching steadily up the hill, but not coming in such close formation, being forced to turn aside here and there lest they trample upon the bodies of those who were left behind during the first retreat.

I heard some one near me say that General Howe was marching in advance of his men; but I failed to single him out. It seemed impossible to center my attention upon any one place; I could see only the blaze of red with the sunlight tipping the steel bayonets until one's eyes ached from the glare.

Again we were cautioned not to fire until the word had been given, and this time, having had somewhat of experience, we obeyed, standing with beating hearts, parched throats, and joints aching

from the labor of the night, to cut down once more that apparently resistless wave.

Then came the command, and as before, the red-coats fell to the earth in dozens and twenties until it seemed to me, who was the same as looking through a veil of red, that those who were upon the ground lay there in sufficient numbers to form a breastwork for the advancing men.

I could see here and there officers beating men onward with the flat of their swords, forcing them toward our intrenchments from which came such a deadly fire.

"Keep it up, lads! Don't waste any time, for they are making ready to turn tail again!" I shouted, and then Archie leaped up on the platform by my side, screaming as if suddenly bereft of his senses, while he discharged his musket again and again.

The lines of red wavered, were broken, or moved back here and there, until it was impossible to make out amid the smoke any definite action, and once more I lost my head, knowing nothing save that I was struggling with all my might to check those who would have over-run us.

And we did check them! For the second time the pride of the king's army ran in utter rout down the hill, despite all their officers could do to check them, and we, the rag-tag, had accomplished that which a few days before Governor Gage had said was impossible.

Once more had we whipped them in fair fight, and once more we gave way to rejoicing, no longer believing that the battle was won; but grown strong in the knowledge that twice had they sent their best men against us, and twice we had driven them back

in ignoble defeat, even though during the last assault General Howe himself led the way to give his men courage.

One of our Minute Boys had been killed outright, and lay on his face upon the ground within a few feet of where I stood. How long he had been there no one could say; but we knew that he was alive when we were rejoicing over the first repulse.

Singular as it may seem when so many among us had been killed and wounded, no other of the Minute Boys had fallen, and while we stood inside the redoubt in the first flush of this second victory, we clasped each other by the hands as if congratulating ourselves that we were yet in the land of the living after having, as it were, gone down to the very brink of that dark river which separates this world from the next.

It is not well that I set down very much concerning our lads, for even at this late day it makes my heart ache as I recall to mind their appearance.

One could see hunger and thirst written on their powder-begrimed faces. It seemed to me as I looked at Archie, that his eyes were sunken, and I know full well his lips were drawn apart as are those of one who has been suddenly killed.

Save for the excitement of the battle we would have been in most painful distress; but the mind is so much stronger than the body that even when we had time to think of our condition, little heed was given to anything save the desire to do once more what we had twice done before, and make an end by the final repulse of the lobster backs.

Yet even I, raw recruit as I was, understood with a sinking of the heart which I cannot well explain,

that we were far less able to cope with those lines of red now than when they first came upon us.

It was not that we counted our loss in numbers, nor that our bodies were more illy fitted to stand the strain; but we were sorely weakened because of lacking that with which to fight. Our ammunition was well nigh spent; I question if we had fifty bayonets among us all told, with which to resist an attack should the Britishers succeed in scaling the breastworks, and when the last ounce of powder had been burned what would be our plight?

I was not the only one who speculated upon these terrible things. Every man in the redoubt knew that we had not of powder and ball sufficient to repulse the next assault however desperately we might strive. There were many who did not have a single charge for their muskets, and Colonel Prescott gave orders that we should divide, those having considerable sharing with those who had none, until, when this was done, I had mayhap four charges, while those around me could boast of no more.

Some among us gathered up rocks to be used as missiles; others ventured out, even though the enemy was pouring from Copp's hill and the ships of war, volleys of grape and solid shot upon the hillside where the red-coated dead lay in such numbers, and strove to add to their store, more than one losing his life in the attempt to get that which he needed in the hope of saving it.

And now lest it be asked why powder and ball were not sent to us from every American post nearby, I desire to set down that which I afterward read concerning the condition of the forces at Cambridge and elsewhere, and at the same time it

must be understood that the Britishers were sweeping that narrow stretch of land which we called Charlestown Neck, with such a heavy fire that it was almost the same as death for any one to venture across. This is what I have seen elsewhere:

"During this gallant work on Breed's hill all was confusion elsewhere. General Ward was at Cambridge without sufficient staff officers to carry his orders. Late in the afternoon the commanding general despatched his own with Patterson's and Gardner's regiments, to the field of action; but to the raw recruits the aspect of the narrow Neck was terrifying, swept as it was by British fire.

"Colonel Gardner succeeded in leading three hundred men to Bunker hill, and was advancing boldly at their head when he was wounded mortally. His men were thrown into confusion, and very few of them engaged in the combat until the retreat commenced. Other regiments failed to reach the lines. Putnam in the meantime was using his utmost exertion to form the confused troops on Bunker hill and get fresh men with bayonets across the Neck."

Now it is easy to understand why we, so sorely pressed and lacking the wherewithal to hold our own, were left on Breed's hill to meet this third assault, which would be made by fresh men, as we understood when we saw yet more barges put out from Boston, and afterward learned that General Clinton was joining Howe as a volunteer, bringing with him additional reinforcements.

All this time we were struggling to make such preparations as lay in our power, and as the moments passed without any further movement on the part of the enemy, some of our people began to

believe General Howe had had enough of it — that we would be allowed to remain on the field victorious.

Hiram speedily put an end to any such hope, saying to one man who had declared that the lobster backs would not come upon us again:

"Don't count your chickens before they have begun to hatch. If fresh troops are coming across from Boston, think you they will be allowed to remain on the shore idle? Do you believe General Howe is going to take a flogging from the rag-tag and lay down quietly under it? Instead of predicting what you fancy, make ready for the next assault."

"When a man has only three charges for his musket he hasn't much to do in the way of getting ready," the fellow replied as he shook his powder horn to show how nearly empty it was.

"If so be you will, it is possible to bring down three lobster backs with that number of charges, and unless we waste our ammunition by shooting at random, there is yet a chance that you will see the back of the red-coats again as they go scurrying down the hill."

I looked Hiram full in the face, striving to make out if he really meant all he said; but I might as well have stared at the earth, so far as gaining any information was concerned. I have seen many a man who could put on a bold front when he knew mortal danger menaced, but never one who was able to stand up with a smile on his lips and a quip on his tongue when he knew he had been much the same as been driven into a corner, as did Hiram Griffin that day.

I believe we were left a full half-hour waiting for

the third assault. Certain it was that the time seemed long to me, and I whispered once to Archie, saying:

"I would they might set upon us without delay, for then I shall be able to forget how sorely I am needing so much of water as will moisten my tongue."

"Don't wish the time away, lad," my comrade said gravely. "It may be that you and I have not overly many minutes of life left."

Hiram heard this dismal speech, and quickly stepping a pace nearer to Archie he said with somewhat of irritation in his tone:

"Are you counting on being the first Minute Boy to show the white feather?"

"In what way am I doing that?"

"By croaking about 'last minutes,' instead of allowing your mind to go on to that time when we can eat and drink our fill, the lobster backs having been driven into the swamp. Thus far the Minute Boys of Boston have shown themselves, if you leave out Seth Jepson, to have all the pluck that is needed, and now being come thus far through the battle with full share of credit, it ill beseems you to make dismal predictions regarding the future."

Before Hiram ceased speaking his tone had grown harsh, and I feared there might be angry words between the two even while we stood much the same as face to face with death.

Before I could break in upon them, however, the enemy had begun to show signs of moving, and on the instant we understood that this third assault was to be different from the first two.

At some time during the battle they must have gotten their artillery into favorable position, for

now, suddenly, the whole interior of our breastworks was swept with ball and grape-shot, more blood being shed within five minutes than had been spilled on our side in all the terrible work thus far.

It was no longer possible for any man to remain within the breastwork and live, therefore all were ordered to come into the redoubt, where we were better sheltered, and where the enemy had not as yet found the range.

Forgetting the danger, in my eagerness to know what might follow this new method of attack, I leaned far over the fortification until it was possible for me to see, in the distance, the Britishers coming once more upon us, and that scene was not calculated to give me courage, for I soon understood that the king's soldiers were making better preparations than they had in the past attempts. Instead of climbing the hill laden with heavy knapsacks and sweltering in thick, tightly-fitting uniforms, they had cast aside all that might impede or distress them, and even like the rag-tag, they counted on fighting in their shirt-sleeves as should have been done on such a hot day when they first set the pace.

I cannot set down in military terms the tactics which General Howe now displayed; but certain it is that instead of marching straight up the hill, thus giving us every chance at them, after using their artillery to drive us back into the redoubt, they counted on assaulting us at the weakest point, which was the space between the outworks and the rail fence, as I have already set down.

But whatsoever might be their intentions, certain it was they were coming with as much show of

determination as ever before, and we must perforce stand against them so long as our ammunition lasted, and what then?

My heart sank within me as I tried to answer my own question even while making ready to do my share in the faint hope of repulsing the Britishers.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETREAT

I BELIEVE of a verity that we on Breed's hill might have driven back the Britishers once more, even though our store of ammunition was so small, had it not been for the enemy's artillery which, as I have already said, swept the interior of the breastwork from end to end, forcing us into the redoubt.

Grimly we awaited the oncoming of those lines of red coats. I believe our people fired with truer aim than at any other time during the action, for each knew only too well how necessary it was that every bullet should count.

As they advanced, and the word for us to fire had been given, among the first that fell was one of their colonels, and then two of their majors, after which Hiram set up a shout of triumph, claiming that he had wounded General Howe himself. Even amid the smoke of the battle I could see that the British leader was moving painfully, yet I must confess bravely, in order to remain at the head of his men.

The breeze from the westward, which had come up just in time to blow from our eyes the smoke of the burning buildings in the town, still continued, and the battle field was more clearly in view than ever before.

During mayhap ten minutes we of the American

army did quite as great execution as during the previous assault, cutting great gaps in their lines, and bringing down officer after officer in rapid succession.

Then it was that we could see the beginning of the end. Glancing quickly around to the right and left as I rammed home my last charge, I could see this man and that standing idle, and it was the idleness of impotence and despair, for they had come to the end of their ammunition.

There was no longer anything to be done save await that final assault, with the poor hope of beating back troops armed with bayonets, by the use of clubbed muskets.

Nearer and nearer came the red lines, swarming like hornets over the breastworks, and we all powerless to prevent them!

Could we have had at that moment but half the powder and balls with which we began this battle on Breed's hill, there would never have been a red-coated soldier show his head above our line of works and lived to tell of it.

It seemed to me as if all the space between the fortification and the foot of the hill was covered with lobster backs swarming upon us, and I know that if perchance they were twenty musket-charges left among us, it was what might be called, in such desperate straights, rare good fortune.

Then the enemy clambered up over the parapet, while we met them with a volley of stones, throwing the missiles with as good aim as we had discharged our muskets, and while one might have counted thirty, held them in check.

I have often wondered since, if we had had at our hand as many stones as could have been used,

what would have been the result? But even that poor method of warfare was denied us, for the supply we had gathered was speedily expended, and, what was worse, the fact that we had ceased to shoot bullets showed the Britishers plainly the plight into which we had fallen.

The first officer who appeared above the parapet was that same Major Pitcairn who had led the troops at Lexington when our people were slaughtered there, and although I was no longer assailed by the fever of battle, and could not well look upon the death of a human as being a reason for rejoicing, yet I shouted aloud in glee when a negro soldier among us shot that dastard through the head.

My cry of triumph was speedily swallowed up by the shouts of the lobster backs as they leaped into the redoubt from all sides, coming at us fearlessly with their bayonets, knowing full well we could not make reply save with the butts of our muskets, and these we used, so desperate had our people become, until a score of the king's men had fallen before such crude weapons.

Again and again as we thus fought hand to hand, we Americans retreating backwards step by step, striving to keep the red-coated enemy from spitting us like larks on a toasting fork, I saw the muskets of our people shattered, the butt breaking from the barrel with the force of a blow upon the head of an enemy.

"Are we ordered to retreat?" I shouted wildly in Hiram's ear as we fought side by side, Archie and Silas just behind us.

"Some one has said that Colonel Prescott gave the order; but whether he did or not there is no longer any chance to make resistance," Hiram re-

plied as he crushed the head of a Britisher much the same as you would shatter an egg. "We'll not turn tail and run as the lobster backs did; but go out of here like men, if so be we may."

It was no longer a battle. There were no armies contending; but it had become a fight of the rabble, where each man was striving to defend himself or deal death as best he might, and at such close quarters that those of the Britishers nearest us had no opportunity to reload their weapons. Therefore, save for the fact of having bayonets, they were in little better condition than were we.

We who called ourselves part of the American army were much like a handful of rats surrounded by a pack of dogs, save that there was in our hearts the satisfaction of knowing we had twice bested these same soldiers who were fighting for money alone, and would have beaten them back the third time but for the misfortune of not having the wherewithal to deal out death as we had done before.

How we succeeded in getting out of the redoubt I cannot well say. In a street brawl where forty or fifty men are engaged, those in the thickest of the fight have no idea of what may be going on around them, and so it was with me. We Minute Boys remained in a solid body so far as was possible, aiding each other whenever the opportunity came to ward off a blow from a comrade's head, or striking down with musket or stone a Britisher who was about to thrust his bayonet into a companion's heart.

I only know distinctly that when what was left of our company succeeded in fighting their way

backward out of the redoubt, Colonel Prescott and Doctor Warren were yet facing the Britishers as if it was their purpose to be the last to leave this poor fortification, and immediately we were come into the open where the lobster backs could use their bayonets to greater advantage, it was a case of depending upon our legs entirely, for the red-coats strove mercilessly to cut us to pieces.

Our people were doing their best to gain Bunker hill, where were four or five hundred men of the American army striving bravely to cover our retreat by pouring a heavy fire into the red-coated ranks, and save for this aid we had never lived to gain Charlestown Neck.

After we had turned to run, and I did not do so until Hiram Griffin demanded fiercely that I must in order to save my life, I heard some one shout that Doctor Warren had been killed, and during two or three minutes, mayhap, even while I was putting forth my best efforts at running, did it seem as if it mattered little whether I escaped or not since that friend of the Cause, he who was ever the kindly gentleman and true son of the colony, had been killed even when the battle was at an end.

It was to my mind more like being murdered than having been killed in fair fight, and I shouted to those around me that we should turn about and avenge his death, when Hiram seized me by the shirt collar, forcing me on in front of him as he swore that unless I put forth my best efforts he would strangle me.

I was not the only one fleeing toward Charlestown Neck pursued by the lobster backs, who was much the same as crazy. We were mad with dis-

appointment, frenzied by the thought that all this had come about because we lacked the means of finishing the battle as it had been begun.

And now right here let me set down what we afterward learned was the cost in blood of this engagement at Breed's hill. Our officers reported that one hundred and fifteen had been killed or were missing; three hundred and five wounded, and thirty taken prisoners, making in all a total of four hundred and fifty who had either given up their lives, or were suffering from wounds. The most serious of our losses, as it seemed to me, was the death of Doctor Warren. Colonel Gridley was wounded; but had been carried by our people from the field.

General Gage reported to the British Government that two hundred and twenty-six of his men had been killed; eight hundred and twenty-eight wounded, making in all ten hundred and fifty-four as against our four hundred and fifty. Among the British were killed eighty-nine officers.

About four hundred buildings in Charlestown were burned by the British, and the estimated money loss was six hundred thousand dollars.

I have put this in here lest I forget to make mention of the fact, that in what the Britishers set down as a victory they lost twice and a half as many men as we, and all that had been gained by this outpouring of blood were the hastily constructed works which we had thrown up on Breed's hill.

And now to continue my feeble attempt at telling what part we Minute Boys of Boston took in that terrible retreat.

I believe of a verity that had it not been for Hiram Griffin some, if not all, of us would have

fallen into the hands of the lobster backs, for it is true that we were sadly confused — frightened if you choose to put it in such words, and had so far lost mastery of ourselves that but for his holding us up sharply to the work we would have come to grief.

As I said, the men who had come to Bunker hill did good work in covering our retreat until they themselves became panic-stricken, heeding not the entreaties nor the threats of Israel Putnam, as he strove in vain to hold them steady that we who were without ammunition might have some small show of escaping with our lives.

Then it was that when all of General Putnam's attempts were shown to be vain, these men of ours who should have held their own on Bunker hill, joined in the retreat, and we set off, a rabble rather than the remnants of an army, in the perilous attempt to pass across Charlestown Neck, which was swept with shot from the ship *Glasgow* and the small craft which had been anchored by the British in position to cover that narrow passage in order to prevent reinforcements being sent to us who were struggling on Breed's hill.

Panic-stricken as we were, the only thought in our minds was that the enemy would pursue us even as far as Cambridge, in order to make an end of the so-called rebellion at once, and while fleeing at my best speed, dodging now and then a British cannon ball, I feverishly hoped they would come after us with all their force, for there, where we could find ammunition, it might be possible for us to pay back some part of the debt of revenge which we owed.

Of that terrible retreat it is, perhaps, not neces-

sary I should set down more than that after we had succeeded in crossing the Neck, leaving behind us many a poor fellow weltering in his blood, we continued on at a speed which, in view of our fatigue, would not have been possible save because of the seeming certainty that death must overtake him who played the laggard.

Not until we were come to the encampment at Cambridge and were lying at full length upon the ground as do dogs after a furious race, did I realize all of the exhaustion which had been brought about by the night of perilous toil and the day of suspense and desperate fighting, together with the mad flight which called for the last remaining ounce of strength in our bodies.

I no longer gave heed to my comrades; it was as if the Minute Boys of Boston had never an existence — almost as if the Cause was forgotten, while I lay prone upon the ground so weary that it was an exertion to breathe. Hunger and thirst had no place in my mind, nor did I realize anything distinctly, save the utter physical collapse, until another day had come, when Hiram aroused me to a sense of life and responsibility.

"What has happened?" I cried stupidly, staggering to my feet when he had shaken me into consciousness, and he replied grimly, like one who has a deep sore in his heart and strives to hide it by showing anger:

"Much has happened as you will understand when slumber has been driven from your eyelids. Now is not the time for you to remain idle, after having had eight hours of sleep. Where are your Minute Boys?"

"Here, if I mistake not," I answered, not yet

fully realizing all that had taken place since we marched out from Cambridge under the leadership of Colonel Prescott.

"I have been astir since sunrise, and find but seven, counting you and I as two. It seems certain many of the lads have given up their lives; but I have learned from what seems good evidence that Silas Brownrigg was taken prisoner by the lobster backs."

"How do you know that?" I cried, my voice sounding shrill because of the fear which came upon me concerning the other lads.

"I have talked with those who saw him far in the rear before we were come to Charlestown Neck, and there is one here who claims that he saw a grenadier seize the lad just before we were arrived within range of the *Glasgow's* fire."

"What of Archie and Harvey?" I cried, instantly full of apprehension.

"Over yonder, not twenty paces away," and Hiram pointed across the field where were two hundred or more men fallen into the same sleep of exhaustion from which I had just awakened.

"Let's go to them," I said suiting the action to the words, and a few moments later the two lads, with slumber yet hanging heavily on their eyelids, were sitting bolt upright listening to me as I repeated Hiram's words.

"It will be a ticklish job to make our way into Boston town now while the enemy is so keenly on the alert," Archie said, as if there was no question in his mind but that we would set off without delay to do whatsoever we might to help our unfortunate comrade.

"Do you so much as fancy we might get into

the town? Or, having smuggled our way through the lines, that we could remain there an hour without being detected?" I cried, amazed because my comrade had seemingly suggested such a perilous adventure.

"It matters little whether we can succeed or not, the attempt must be made," Archie said promptly, and I understood there was in his mind the thought that now had come the time when he might be able to show his willingness to aid a comrade, even as we had shown ours in his behalf.

I looked at Hiram, believing he would cry out against any such desperate hazard; but he remained silent as if agreeing with all Archie had said.

"Since the battle it stands to reason that the Britishers will keep a sharper watch then ever before," I said, determined at the outset to show all the dangers which were in the way of such an attempt as Archie had suggested. "Even though we succeeded in getting into the town, what could we accomplish, except it was possible to move about the streets freely? You know full well that within an hour after we show ourselves, some of the young Tories will spy us out, and there is no need for me to say what would happen then."

"I am willing to agree the chances are much against us," Archie replied, "and yet there is a possibility that by some lucky accident we could come across Silas. I realize what it is to be held prisoner by the lobster backs, and yet that which I suffered must be as nothing compared with his situation, for more than one of the Britishers know he fought desperately well. Perhaps the lad lies wounded, lacking attention, lacking nursing. Are we to stay here in safety?"

"I'm not saying aught against our doing all that is possible," was my hot retort; "but it is beyond reason to suppose we might help him even in the slightest degree."

"So most like you said when I was in prison, and yet by a singular combination of lucky accidents I was set free."

I understood full well that it would be useless for me to attempt further to combat the resolution which my comrade had already formed, and yet I could not bring myself to see in the two cases any likeness one to the other. The dullest among us knew in what frame of mind the Britishers must be after having been so nearly whipped by the "rag-tag" of the colonies, and it was almost certain that the prisoners captured during the battle, or the retreat, would be guarded so closely as to prevent any such slight aid as we might be able to give.

What Harvey thought of the matter I could not guess. As we discussed it I fancied now he took sides with me, and again that he believed Archie to be in the right. As to Hiram, it was evident that any mad scheme which might be proposed would meet with his favorable attention.

If I could have seen the least ray of hope in such an enterprise, none would have been more eager than I; but to my mind there was not one chance in an hundred that we could even succeed in getting into the town, yet a word from Harvey caused me to become as eager as either Archie or Hiram to set about the apparently hopeless attempt.

"If there are but seven of our Minute Boys here in the encampment, it is the duty of those who have come out from the battle unscathed to learn the fate of the others. Who can say that the lobster backs

may not have more than Silas in their clutches?"

It was much the same as if Harvey had said that I, as captain of the Minute Boys, was in duty bound to learn the fate of those who were absent, regardless of how much danger might be attached to such an effort, and from that instant I was ready, even showed eagerness, to undertake anything whatsoever which they should propose so long as it had reference to the missing members of our company.

It so chanced that my father passed near at about this time, and I ran to have speech with him, explaining what my comrades would have me do, and why there was apparent reason for our making every effort to enter Boston town.

"It is not to be thought of," he cried sharply, before I was come to an end of the story. "There is no hope of your being able to aid the lad, if so be he is a prisoner; you would only be venturing your heads into the lion's mouth to no purpose."

"But we did succeed in rescuing Archie when it seemed impossible anything could be done," I insisted, ready to argue now that he had shut down upon the plan so decidedly.

"The situation was far different then. A battle had not been fought; the Britishers were not smarting under a sense of defeat, although most like they will speak of the action at Breed's hill as a victory, and now that we of the American army have shown ourselves able to cope with trained soldiers, every precaution will be taken against our spying upon their movements. It is a mad scheme, and the sooner you put it out of your mind the better."

But for the fact that Harvey had much the same as reminded me of my duty as captain of the Minute Boys, I would have allowed that my father's opinion

settled the matter definitely; but as it was I believed duty demanded that I go as had been suggested, regardless of every danger.

None of my comrades asked any questions when I returned from the interview with my father. They had evidently read from the expression on his face, and the tone in which he spoke, although it had been impossible to hear the words, that he set his face against any movement of the kind, and I fancied the three were waiting to hear whether I counted to crawl back from the enterprise, therefore it was I said promptly:

"The attempt shall be made, and because of having been chosen captain of the company it is my duty to go, and go alone."

"Why alone?" Harvey asked.

"Because there is no reason why the lives of four Minute Boys be sacrificed. If there is any show of coming upon the lad, I may be able to aid him single-handed, and for all of us to venture into town would be increasing the chances of detection."

"You could not have released me single-handed," Archie cried, "however might have been your inclination, and therefore it is I shall go whether you are willing or not."

The other two were quite as decided in their intention to take part in the venture, and, realizing how useless it would be to make any effort at bringing about a change of opinion, I agreed that we would all go, even though believing that we were not warranted in so doing.

Once this matter had been settled Hiram seemed to consider himself the leader of our party, regardless of the fact that I had been chosen captain of the company, and straightway began to lay plans,

thus showing, to my mind at least, that he had decided, even before awakening me, on some such scheme.

Had the matter been left to my decision, I would have held that our efforts at gaining the town must be made by water, either from Mystic river or Willis creek; but Hiram said in a tone which admitted of no argument:

"We'll go down the Cambridge to Muddy river in a skiff, and from there strike into Dorchester where we shall find a small body of our own troops."

"And also, where we'll be bottled up in great shape, for even you cannot believe there will be any chance of our getting past the British fortifications on Boston Neck," I said, believing I had found such a defect in his plan that he would not attempt to carry it out.

"I'm at a loss to see how we are bottled up any worse in Dorchester, than here, and because our people haven't been making many attempts to get into the town from that direction, I believe our best chance of success lies there. It is not absolutely necessary we attempt to go over the Neck; but it should be possible, on a dark night, to slip across in a boat from nearabout Nook's hill to some part of the town south of Windmill point."

"And what then?" I asked with no slight show of impatience, for it seemed as if there was mighty little of common sense in this plan of his by which we were to risk our necks.

"That's as far as we can get by laying out the work in advance. All the rest must come about through accident."

"But once in the town," I insisted, "how is it going to be possible for us to learn where the pris-

oner is confined, since we do not dare show ourselves in broad day?"

"There are yet people in Boston town who love the Cause?" Hiram said as if asking a question, and I contented myself with nodding, for it seemed much as if he would put me off with empty words.

"Aye," I replied, "most like hundreds of them."

"And you lads who have lived there should be able to find a hiding-place without going among those who might be suspected of harboring a rebel."

"I could go to twenty such places, and yet not be able to say how we would be able to provide ourselves with food while keeping under cover."

"Well then," and it seemed as if Hiram was losing his patience, "I cannot lay out for you in so many words a plan of work when so much depends upon accident; but if you will do whatsoever you may toward getting into the town, I believe there is a possibility of at least finding where Silas is imprisoned, and if so be we are not able to lend him any aid, I'm of the mind we can get out again no matter how alert the lobster backs may be."

"When would you set off?" I asked, speaking more sharply than was necessary.

"Within an hour," was the prompt reply.

"Does that please you, lads?" I asked, turning to Archie and Harvey, and they said "Yes," so emphatically that I could not put further obstacles in the way, save at the expense of setting myself down as being faint-hearted, or unwilling to venture into danger for the purpose of striving to release Silas.

It was then agreed among us that we should make such preparations as were possible, each lad getting ready for the work in hand as seemed to him best, and were to meet on the Common within the hour.

My preparations consisted chiefly in getting all in the shape of food possible. I did not believe we could make our way into Boston armed with muskets, therefore borrowed from an old sailor a pistol with a plentiful supply of ammunition, and bargained with a New Hampshire recruit for a knife which hung in a sheath attached to a belt, like that which is worn by seamen. Then I went to the rendezvous, being the first to arrive, and Hiram came up within a few moments.

He had prepared himself for this hazardous venture by procuring such an amount of rations as might serve one person two or three days. As for weapons, he had none, and when I asked him whether he did not believe it wise to make some provision for meeting an enemy suddenly, he replied that when he came upon a lobster back unawares it would be at such time and in such place as would shut off all chance of using firearms.

"My own two hands will be enough, so far as I am concerned. If we stumble upon a single lobster back other weapons will not be needed. In the event of meeting a squad, it would be folly to make any show of resistance."

I was rapidly losing my good opinion of Hiram's judgment. The first cause being his proposition to embark upon such a wild-goose chase, and the second, his intention to set off without providing himself with any means of defense.

Silas brought with him his musket, and more of powder and ball than he could comfortably carry during a long march, while Archie had only a knife, which was better adapted for the cutting of food than defending his life.

Thus it was that we had with us a musket, a pistol

and two knives, together with as much in the way of provisions as would serve the four of us two days.

"We are well outfitted," I said, intending to speak in a tone of irony. "And now let's set off without delay, for the less time we have in which to consider the chances against success, the better will be my courage."

Hiram gave no heed to my disagreeable tone, but at once led the way toward the river, and then it was we came to understand he had made other arrangements for the journey than those of simply supplying himself with provisions.

He brought us to where a skiff was hauled up on the shore, and from appearances one would have said she had but lately been put in that position, for two pair of oars laid ready at hand, while in the stern-sheets were three or four blankets.

Hiram launched her, motioning for us to take our places, and when Archie asked at what hour he had thus made preparations for the voyage, he replied laughingly:

"A great deal may be done in a few minutes, and it so happened that more than half of my work in getting possession of this skiff, had been done before I awakened Luke Wright."

"But at that time you did not know if we would set out in the hope of aiding Silas," I cried, whereupon he added in a business-like tone:

"True for you; but I was mighty certain that I should go, even though none other agreed to bear me company."

"And you were also decided that your plan should be carried out," Harvey said with a laugh.

"Aye, because if you lads had agreed upon get-

ting into the town by the same route as you have been doing, I should have set off by myself."

It vexed me not a little that Hiram had gone through the form of consulting us when he was already determined on what he would do and how it should be done; but no good could come from my giving words to such thoughts, and I held my peace.

Hiram and Harvey worked the oars. I made myself as comfortable as possible in the stern-sheets, while Archie perforce remained in the bow of the craft in order that he might, as Griffin expressed it, " trim ship."

We went rapidly down past the two breastworks known as " number one " and " number two " without having been hailed by those on shore, and indeed there was no good reason why our people should interfere with any who were so far up the river.

Near to nightfall, however, when we were come to that three-gun battery which stood just above where Fort Brookline was afterward built, the sentinel made peremptory demand that we come on shore and give an account of ourselves.

" This is work for you to do, since you are the captain," Hiram said to me, and I retorted:

" I may be the captain of the Minute Boys, but I am surely not the leader of this expedition. If there is any question raised here against our continuing the voyage, you are the one who must answer it."

" That can be done in short order," Hiram replied laughingly as, swinging the bow of the boat around until it was stuck fast in the mud, he leaped ashore with the bearing of one who sets about some trifling task.

There was almost a hope in my mind that we might be prevented from going further on our hazardous venture, but when in less than ten minutes Hiram returned, looking as if he had never known a care in his life, I understood that either by making a clean breast of the matter, or by inventing some plausible reason for our leaving Cambridge, he had satisfied the officer in command of the battery.

It was long past midnight when we were arrived at the mouth of the river, and since there was no good reason why we should strive to come to an end of our journey a few hours sooner or later, we hauled the skiff ashore where grew a thicket of bushes, such as would conceal us from view of any who might pass either by land or water.

After the skiff was pulled up within the screen of foliage, Hiram spread out two of the blankets to protect us from the damp earth, and the others he proposed we should use as a covering of what he was pleased to call a "field bed."

Then we sat ourselves down to partake of food for the first time since leaving the encampment, and I noted with no little anxiety that if we continued to have such appetites during the next four and twenty hours, our store of food would be sadly diminished.

Despite my forebodings as to the outcome of this hazard, I fell asleep shortly after stretching myself out at full length between Archie and Harvey, nor did I awaken until Hiram shook me into consciousness, saying that the sun would rise in half an hour, and we should be well on our journey before the heat of the day had grown too great.

CHAPTER XII

IN BOSTON TOWN

It seemed as if Hiram grew bolder the nearer we advanced to the point of danger, for instead of going up Muddy river and from thence making our way across to Dorchester through Roxbury, as had been much the same as agreed upon the night previous, he put straight for Stony brook, and, hugging the eastern shore of the point, we made our way along until having come to the American outpost, arriving there about nightfall.

Here we had no difficulty in making ourselves known, owing to the fortunate circumstance that the captain who was in command at that time had seen us Minute Boys and Hiram more than once at Cambridge, therefore was he ready to welcome us in as hearty a manner as possible, sparing not his stores so that we might husband what little food we had brought from the encampment.

As a matter of course he was curious to know where we were bound, and when he asked questions concerning our purpose we lads would have put him off with evasive replies, believing Hiram desired to keep secret that which we would do, therefore was our surprise great when Griffin made a clean breast of the whole scheme, even going into details so far as lay in his power.

It seemed to me only natural the captain would cry out against such a hair-brained scheme, and so

he did, speaking forcefully to the effect that while it was possible we might succeed, when all the circumstances were favorable, in sneaking past the red-coated sentinels, he was confident we would be made prisoners within four and twenty hours after arriving in town.

I rather encouraged him in his outcry against the venture, believing his opinion would have no little weight with Hiram; but it was much the same as pouring water on a duck's back, to argue against what our leader had already set his mind upon.

He listened to all the captain said, making no reply, and when the conversation had come to an end I believe of a verity he was more determined in his purpose than before.

"Are you still bound to find out what a British prison is like?" the captain asked just a trifle petulantly when he was come to an end of his remonstrances.

"We are not minded that they shall take us prisoners; but at the same time we are going into Boston, and if in all that town, where yet remain many who love the Cause, we cannot succeed in hiding ourselves past reasonable danger of being found, then do we deserve to be shut up within stone walls."

When Hiram had said this the captain looked at him pityingly, as I thought, and made reply:

"He who is pig-headed will go his way despite all that others can say to the contrary, therefore I but waste my breath in striving to point out the dangers which are known better by me, than by you lads."

With this he turned on his heels, leaving us to eat our supper, and when he was out of earshot Hiram

said as if the captain's sharp words had pleased him not a little:

"I have known many who didn't have sufficient of pig-headedness in their nature, and we saw some of them in the battle; but, thank God! they were mighty few!"

All of which meant, as I interpreted it, that our leader had been strengthened in his purpose rather than weakened.

Well, we remained at the outpost all night, and by break of day set off on the highway for Dorchester, where we came upon more of our troops, and were forced to spend no little time explaining why we desired to continue on to Nook's hill.

Here, as at the Roxbury outpost, we were given much advice which I considered good, for it was to the effect that we go back to Cambridge rather than sacrifice our liberty, perhaps our lives, in what was little less than an act of folly.

You can fancy that these words had as little effect on Hiram as had the advice of the captain in Roxbury, and on we tramped until coming to where the highway ended in a pasture, when we turned sharply to the westward. On this last course we were headed for the shore, and, having arrived there, followed the line of the coast to a small gun-battery, nearby which was a block-house for the shelter of the men who were in charge of that apology for a fortification.

Here we found no one who could vouch for our loyalty to the Cause, and it was difficult to convince the lieutenant in charge that we were true Americans, for he failed utterly of understanding why, if we would serve the Cause, it was our intent to sacrifice ourselves.

However, before night had come Hiram succeeded in making the officer understand that we had told him no more than the truth, for it seemed that this lieutenant came from Concord, and Griffin was intimately acquainted with many of his friends.

When he found that it was not possible to turn us back, he set about doing all he could to further what he called "the mad plan," and to that end agreed that when everything was in favor of our making an attempt to enter Boston, meaning on the first cloudy or stormy night, he would provide us with a skiff. He also directed us to an old man who lived at Windmill point, by name of Job Lord, whom he declared would do for us all within his power, and insisted that we might trust him as we would our own fathers.

We remained with these soldiers four days, during which time even Hiram saw no fair opportunity to cross over into the town, and meanwhile we were eating our hearts out with impatience. As has already been said, too often, perhaps, I did not favor the plan, but yet before a suitable night came I was eager to be about the undertaking, for anything was better than remaining there twirling our thumbs, and it seemed certain that each day we lingered rendered it more difficult for us to come at Silas.

Then, near about sundown on a certain afternoon, clouds began to gather in the sky. There was a promise of rain in the southerly wind, and before darkness had fully come we saw to it that our skiff was made ready for the short journey; that the oars were muffled, and that such provisions as the men at the battery could spare, were bestowed among our clothing in such a way as would least hamper

us in case we were forced to depend upon our heels for safety.

The men, whom we had come to know right well during our long stay, bade us "good bye" as if believing we would never meet again, and so solemn was the leave-taking that much of my eagerness to forward the venture was dispelled.

We waited until after nine of the clock, and then pushed cautiously out from the shore, heading as nearly as we might for Windmill point, it being our purpose to seek out this Job Lord, to whom we had been commended, before doing anything else. But there was much of danger in the way ere we could come upon the man, for the lieutenant had assured us that the vigilance of the Britishers before the battle at Breed's hill, was as nothing compared with what we would find it now.

Save the weather had favored us as it did on that night when we fled from Boston after having rescued Archie, no better time could have been chosen for the attempt. The rain did not bear out the token which the southerly wind gave; but the sky was covered with dense clouds, and had we been provided with a sail the journey might have been made in short order, unless, peradventure, it was interrupted by a British guard-boat.

It can well be supposed that we held our peace as we approached the point and heard the cries of the sentinels on the shore, and I believed of a verity that we could not put the skiff aground without being halted.

We came up on the eastern side of the point, Hiram steering with the oars after having cautioned that we should do no more than remain motionless, and when the water shoaled our leader stepped out

over the port rail, motioning for us to do the same. When we were standing knee-deep in the water, Griffin gave the light skiff a vigorous thrust, sending her up past the town, for he did not count on her being found next morning to give proof that someone had made a landing.

We had come to the town, as you might say, without having seen a red-coated sentinel, and because I had believed it would not even be possible for us to approach the shore without being hailed, it seemed to me this was a good omen, therefore did my spirits rise higher than at any time since we set out on the venture.

About midway between the point and Darby's wharf we scrambled up on the land, Archie leading the way because he was better acquainted with this portion of the town than any other of the company, and headed across lots for South street, counting to gain Cow lane where we were told Job Lord lived.

As we made our way cautiously, noiselessly as Indians might have done, it was possible to hear loud voices coming from the direction of Hill's wharf, and I had no doubt but that a guard of Britishers was stationed there, being all the more convinced that such was a fact because of our not having come across any of the lobster backs when finally we stood at the corner of Cow lane.

If I remember rightly, there were then on the right-hand side as you faced Fort hill, three buildings. The first a small dwelling, next a stable, and then a house built partly of logs and partly of sawed timbers, in which last the lieutenant at the battery had told us Master Lord lived. The officer had also said that instead of going directly to the

door to demand admittance, we must pass around to the easterly side and knock on the second shutter from the end.

Now it was Hiram's turn to take the lead, and he ordered us to remain within the shadow cast by the stable until having made certain there was no one on the street, after which he walked swiftly around the house in which Master Lord lived, and gave the signal as had been advised.

We followed closely upon his heels, as you can well imagine, and after he had rapped softly on the window I wondered what would be the result if we had hit upon the wrong building, when a cautious voice was heard from the inside.

"If you have aught of business with me go to the rear door."

This we did, and, still acting in accordance with the instructions of the lieutenant, Hiram said, not waiting for the door to be opened:

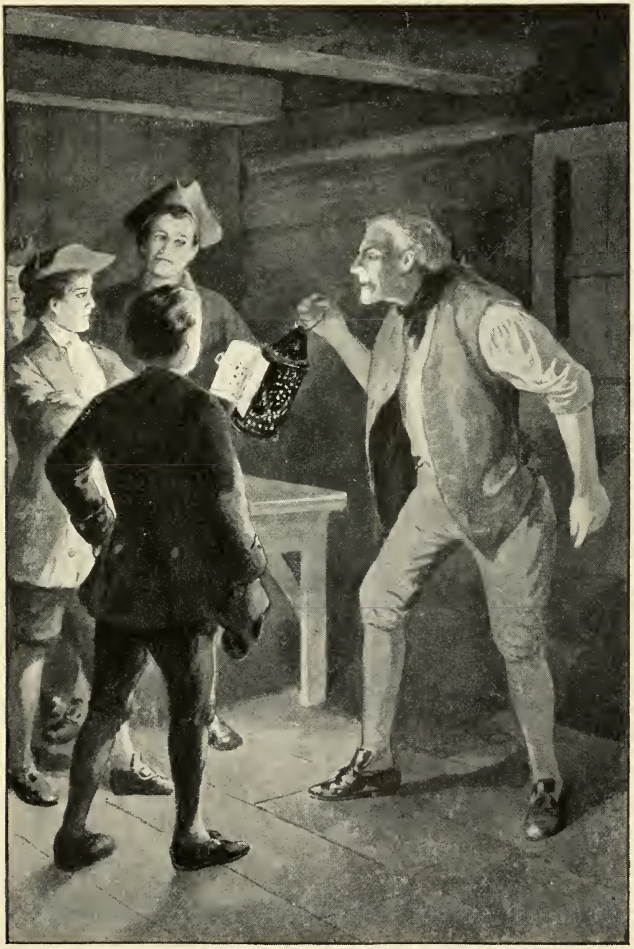
"We are come to learn if you can supply us with fish?"

"When do you want them?" was the answer, and our leader replied:

"As soon as possible, for fear some one will come up and interrupt the bargain."

All this conversation, we had been told, was necessary in order to convince Master Lord that his visitors were true to the Cause and desired his aid.

That we had repeated the words correctly was shown by the opening of the door, and although no one could be seen, we four stepped inside hurriedly, after which the door was closed and barred, when the screen was thrown from a lantern which set on a rude table. Then we saw before us the man



"MASTER LORD HELD UP THE UNSCREENED LANTERN."

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whom we had been told would be able, above all others, to aid us in our dangerous venture.

Master Lord was a tall, thin, hatchet-faced person, with shifty eyes which gave you the impression that he had something to conceal. In fact, he was the reverse of the man in whom I would put confidence, and yet the lieutenant at the battery had assured us that again and again Job Lord had given evidence of his loyalty to the Cause.

However, it was not for us to find fault with his personal appearance, for however true or however false he might be, we were dependent upon him, or would be, after having explained the purpose of our coming.

Master Lord held up the unscreened lantern that he might scrutinize each in turn, and this he did in silence, devoting to it no little time, after which he commanded us to follow him as he led the way through a trap-door into the cellar.

I was considerably surprised at finding this place more comfortably furnished than the room above. There were two couches made of saplings and covered with beds of straw; a table, and a fire-place, behind which hung all the implements for cooking. Suspended from the beams were two large lanterns. One of these Master Lord lighted, carrying back the smaller lantern to the room above, and, rejoining us, took his seat on a stool at the table, asking sharply with much the air of a judge:

"What brings you lads into Boston at this time?"

"It is an overly long story," Hiram replied, drawing up to the table a stool for himself and sitting down as if to begin the tale; but before he could say more Master Lord interrupted him by demanding of Archie:

"Is not your father that John Hemming who is known as a Son of Liberty?"

"Aye, sir, that he is."

"Then you four must have been in the party that set off from Barton's point not long since, and were afterward heard of at Hog island?"

"That we were, sir," Archie replied.

"And it may be you know somewhat concerning the doings at Breed's hill?"

"These lads should be well acquainted with what took place there, since they acted a manly part," Hiram cried before anyone else could speak. "There was no man in the ranks who behaved in better fashion than they."

"And having kept clear of the Britishers that day, you are come to give them another chance at you?" Master Lord inquired, still looking at Archie, and again Hiram took it upon himself to make reply:

"You had best hear the story as to why these lads have come," he said, fearing, as I believed, lest Master Lord insist that we take advantage of the darkness to retrace our steps.

Then, without waiting for permission, Hiram told all that we had learned concerning Silas; explained why we left the encampment, and gave the details of our stay at the battery near Nook's hill, adding in conclusion:

"When the Britishers come to know that Silas Brownrigg was of that same party which carried away the provisions from Hog island, and begin to suspect he might have been concerned in releasing a prisoner, they will most like treat him with greater severity than may be shown those unfortunates who

were captured at the close of the battle, having no worse record than love of the colonies."

Master Lord nodded, as if to say that he quite agreed with Hiram; but remained silent so long that it seemed as if he had forgotten we were there, and I ventured to ask with no little timidity:

"Do you know, sir, where the prisoners taken at Breed's hill are confined?"

"Some of them are in the Queen-street prison, and a goodly number have been taken to the Bridewell. Who could give information to the Britishers that you were concerned in the work at Hog island?" he asked, turning squarely upon me.

"Seth Jepson," I replied, and then I told him of our having enrolled that young Tory among the Minute Boys, as well as the reason we had for suspecting him before he openly played the traitor by bringing the lobster backs to Barton's point.

Again Master Lord fell silent, and this time none of us ventured to question him. We sat there, Hiram drumming with his fingers impatiently upon the table while we three lads stared at our host, until it seemed to me a full five minutes had passed when Master Lord, his eyes shifting uneasily from one to the other, began as if simply giving words to his thoughts:

"This place has served many a time, since General Gage began making trouble, as a refuge for those who were in sore need of hiding, and thus far the Britishers have had no suspicion that I did all within my power to serve the Cause. To make any attempt at releasing a prisoner now, when the lobster backs are so sore over that victory at Breed's hill, which was nothing more nor less than defeat,

promises to reveal the work which has been carried on here."

He ceased speaking a full minute, and then cried out as if believing we suspected him of being afraid:

"Not that I care about myself, for I'll engage to give the Britishers the slip if I have five minutes warning of their intent to take me into custody; but I'm questioning whether we might not be doing more harm to the Cause by making known the secret of this place in order to rescue from prison a single lad, than if we left him to his fate, keeping secure our refuge here for those who may stand in greater need than he does of liberty."

"We were not counting on your taking any hand in this matter," Hiram said promptly when the old man ceased speaking. "Our first need is a hiding-place until we get true knowledge of where the lad may be, and possibly you can send us to some trusty person who, knowing all the circumstances, would give us shelter."

"It is certain you can do nothing this night, and I am willing to confess that you have accomplished a great deal by getting into Boston, for it has not been an easy matter since the battle. Are you in need of food?"

"We have had for supper all that four persons could desire," I replied quickly, fearing lest he might think we had it in mind to depend upon him entirely.

"Then lie down and take your rest, giving no heed to anything you may hear in the night. Regardless of what takes place, hold your peace, and I'll answer for it that no one will suspect there are any hiding here. When the day comes I shall strive

to learn what I may regarding your comrade, and meet you again at the first opportunity."

Having said this, and without giving us a chance to add a word, he went up the ladder which led to the kitchen above, leaving us staring at each other in something very like perplexity and doubt.

Despite all that had been said in Master Lord's favor by the lieutenant at the battery, I could not put full confidence in this man as being a true friend to the Cause. His general appearance was against him, so I thought, and those shifty eyes, which never met yours squarely, were well calculated to breed distrust.

Now it is true that a lad like myself had no right to judge adversely of another who had proven himself true, and yet as I looked into the faces of my companions after our host had gone into the upper room, I saw, or fancied I did, written there much the same as was in my mind.

Certain it is that Hiram was not particularly well pleased because we had given ourselves so unreservedly into the power of Master Lord, and of this he gave proof by saying when we were alone:

"Having come thus far on the venture we must take things as we find them; but it will do no harm if we keep a sharp watch over every one we meet, and it would seem that the four of us should be able to discover anything smacking of treachery."

"Meaning that you have doubts concerning —"

I did not finish the sentence, which was spoken in a whisper, but pointed with my thumb upward so that he might know who I meant, whereupon he said quickly:

"Meaning no one in particular, and everybody in general."

"I would that we had come into this town trusting none but ourselves," Archie said, and Hiram cried much as though the words irritated him:

"Since we are come, and since we have given our secret to another, there is no good sense in harking back to what might have been done. We have set our faces toward Silas, and so long as we remain alive and free they are not to be turned from the goal. Instead of sitting here conjuring up old women's fancies which can do nothing save make the heart faint, suppose we follow Master Lord's advice and get a night's rest, for no one may say when we shall have another such opportunity?"

After this long speech Hiram set the example by throwing himself down on one of the beds of straw, and we lads soon followed him, for it was disheartening to sit there giving words to our fears and doubts when we were at the mercy of the man we distrusted.

How long I slept after my eyes were closed in uneasy slumber, it is impossible for me to say; but looking back at the matter afterward I fancied at least three hours had passed since we entered this cellar, when the sound of loud voices in the room above brought the four of us to our feet as if moved by a single spring of steel.

The floor was of roughly hewn planks, looking, so far as one might see by the light of the lantern, to be very heavy, and we who were in the cellar could not distinguish words spoken in an ordinary tone; but now so excited and apparently angry were the speakers, that we could catch a word here and there, although not in sufficient numbers as to give any inkling to the trend of the conversation.

It seemed to me, judging from the sounds, as if

there were three or four in the room just over our heads, and that all were on the eve of a quarrel — fight would be the better word — so menacing were some of the tones.

It was evident Master Lord had been expecting there would be trouble before morning in this home of his, else why had he warned us against making any outcry or movement if we heard aught that might alarm? Surely his angry visitors could hardly be friends of the Cause, for they would not dare raise their voices so high lest the attention of the patrol be attracted, and if they were not of our people, why was this man, so greatly to be trusted by us "rebels," having any connection with them?

Before we had been awake three minutes came a clattering as if the table was overturned, and I distinguished sounds betokening the splintering of wood, telling that some article of furniture had been destroyed, while above such noises came the trampling of heavy feet, and shouts, and cries.

When this disturbance was at its height Hiram ran toward the ladder as if it was his intent to ascend, despite the warning which had been given; but I clutched his arm, holding him back by main strength as I said in a hoarse whisper:

"If Master Lord is not to be trusted, you would be making a bad matter worse by showing yourself at this time. In case he is true to the Cause, then most like you would do an injury to our people such as could not be repaired."

"You are right," Hiram said after the briefest hesitation, and he went back from the ladder to take a seat on the bed.

The lantern was still burning. None of us had been minded to extinguish the flame when we laid

down to rest, because of the doubts which assailed us all, and therefore it was we could look into each others' faces during that seemingly desperate struggle which was going on above, mutely asking for some solution to what was a fearsome mystery.

Once when the uproar was greatest, Archie whispered that he would go to the top of the ladder, hoping it might be possible there to distinguish something of what was said; but he failed in the attempt, coming back to report that he could see no glimmer of light around the edges of the door, therefore believed it must be covered on the upper side, either to prevent those same visitors from seeing the entrance to the cellar, or to shut out from us all sound.

I think the quarrel, or fight, whichever it may be called, continued upward of half an hour, and then it seemed much as if those who had taken part in it were become friends again, for we heard nothing betokening anger, while now and then came the tramp of footsteps across the floor, showing that the visitors yet remained in the house.

After a time slumber lay so heavy on my eye-lids that I stretched myself out on the bed once more, falling asleep almost immediately, and when I next awakened there was the belief in my mind that another day had come.

Because of being in the cellar, which was wholly underground, no light could come to us from the outside; but the lantern burned dimly as if the oil had been nearly consumed, and I fancied it was day.

My comrades awakened very shortly afterward like lads who have had their fill of slumber, and we lay on the beds trying for at least the twentieth time

to get some glimmer of an idea regarding the strange doings of the night before, as well as questioning whether it might not be possible for us to learn whether Master Lord was at home.

While we talked Hiram, growing impatient, went boldly up the ladder, setting his shoulder against the trap-door; but failing to move it ever so slightly, and at this seeming evidence of our being held prisoners we grew alarmed.

So narrow was the ladder that two of us could not stand side by side on the upper rung in order to come at the barrier, and when each in turn had spent his strength against the heavy timbers without effect, we came together near the table, groping about that we might touch hands, for by this time the flame of the lantern had died away entirely, leaving us in total darkness.

"If Master Lord wanted to make friends with the Britishers, he would be on a fair road to so doing by giving us up to General Gage," I suggested, striving to speak in a mirthful tone as if in my mind there was no possibility of such treachery on his part, and Harvey clutched me by the hand nervously, as he whispered:

"Don't! Don't give words to what seems so very like the truth!"

"Have done with talk like that!" Hiram cried angrily. "To judge Master Lord an enemy is the same as calling the lieutenant, who treated us in such friendly fashion, a traitor."

"But why are we locked in here when it surely must be daylight?"

"There can be no answer to that question until Master Lord himself comes to make it, and I am bound to hold him a good man and true because of

what we have been told, until he proves the contrary."

I believe Hiram himself was more than a little alarmed, for it seemed to me he struggled overly much to convince us he was apparently easy in mind, and we were yet giving words to our painful doubts when, without our having heard a sound previously, the trap-door was raised, letting into the cellar a flood of light as if the day had already grown old.

It was no more than natural we should step quickly toward the foot of the ladder, meeting there Master Lord himself, who looked about as if surprised because we were in darkness, and then, ascending quickly, he returned before we had time to follow, bringing with him the smaller lantern.

Not until he had set this aflame and placed it on the table did he give any heed to the questions which we were showering upon him; but then he said with the air of one who is vexed with too many words:

"Yes, it is full noon. I would have come to you before; but was on your business, and believed you could content yourselves, even in this poor place, knowing that your work was being forwarded. Are you suffering for food?"

"We can bear with hunger many hours and make no complaint, as has already been shown at Breed's hill," Hiram replied in a tone of sharpness. "Because of what we heard last night, and through knowing that we were locked in here as prisoners, did we come to be somewhat uneasy in mind."

"Then you tried to get out when there was trouble above, regardless of my warning?" the old man cried angrily.

"We held ourselves as you commanded," and now Hiram's voice rang with temper. "It was this

morning we strove to learn whether we were free to come and go as we pleased, and found that such was not the case."

"Neither are you free, so far as leaving this house without my consent is concerned. I have much the same as promised to aid you, and am doing so, even at risk to myself and injury to the Cause, therefore it is you are holden here until I shall give the word that you may depart without endangering the secret of this place."

Master Lord spoke with such an air of authority, as if he understood full well we were thoroughly in his power, that I was more alarmed than at ăny time since we came into the town, and mayhap there was somewhat of the same feeling in Hiram's heart, for he asked as if he had the right to know:

"What was going on above us last night?"

"What did you think might be happening?" Master Lord asked.

"It sounded as if three or four men were fighting to such purpose that the furniture of the room was destroyed."

"You have such a good idea of the matter that there is no need for me to make any explanation," Master Lord replied somewhat indifferently. "There were three Tories with me last evening, and but for the fact of their being well known as favoring the king, I am thinking one or more of us might have been taken into custody by the patrol."

"Then you consort with enemies of the Cause?" Hiram asked, and the old man replied:

"Aye, that I do, else how might it be possible for me to do our people a good turn here in Boston town?"

The man could have made no reply which would

have disturbed me more sorely than did this, for it was in substance exactly what Seth Jepson had said when we taxed him with being traitorously inclined, and if it had been possible to get out of that cellar without leaving my comrades in the lurch, I would have taken to my heels, fleeing through the streets of Boston town at risk of being arrested by the patrol, rather than remain there at his mercy.

If Hiram remembered the excuse Seth made for having been seen in the company of Tories, and set the words alongside those just spoken by Master Lord, he failed to give proof of the fact; but asked as if believing everything had been explained:

"Did you succeed in learning aught concerning Silas Brownrigg?"

"There is a lad among the prisoners in the Bridewell, and none, so far as I can learn, in the Queen-street prison. I am of the belief your friend is the boy I have heard about, because I saw young Jepson loitering around the building as if expecting to see some one that might interest him."

"How is this Bridewell guarded?" Hiram asked after a moment's pause.

"Forty men are stationed there, twenty being kept on duty all the time, and unless you can find one of the lobster backs who would lend his aid, there is no possibility of your doing that for which you came."

Master Lord spoke decidedly, and as if he believed our mission was come to an end because of the difficulties which lay in the way, whereupon Hiram said in a mild tone, which gave one the idea that he had every confidence in his host:

"Then you would advise that we give it up as a

bad job, feeling certain we shall be able to do nothing?"

To my bewilderment Master Lord acted as if surprised because Hiram was willing to abandon the enterprise so quickly, and replied hurriedly:

"If so be you have grown faint-hearted, then turn back now while there is yet time; but if I had taken the chances of coming into Boston town knowing the Britishers were eager to clap me into prison, I would hold to the work so long as I held to life."

"And that is exactly what we count on doing, Master Lord," Hiram cried emphatically, as he brought his hand heavily down upon the old man's shoulder. "We are thanking you for the information given, and now are ready to leave this house if there is likelihood we may bring suspicion upon you."

"Where would you go?"

"We'll take our chances on the street when night has come."

"But you are not driven out from here!" Master Lord cried quickly. "I'm advising that you stay where it is possible to remain securely hidden, until such time as the chance you are waiting for presents itself."

He spoke like an honest man, and yet on the instant there came to my mind the question as to whether he had any traitorous intent in thus advising us, after having much the same as said we could not hope to succeed in our purpose.

CHAPTER XIII

GRAVE DOUBTS

MASTER LORD was evidently of the opinion that we could do no better than remain where we were until it should become possible for him to show us whereby we might aid Silas, and I wondered much that he spoke in such a strain, after having declared that the force of lobster backs at the Bridewell was so large that we had no hope of getting at the lad even to give him a cheering word.

This much I ventured to remark, glancing meanwhile at Hiram in order to learn, if possible, what he might think of the matter, for it was come to my mind that our comrade, who was ever eager to be up and doing, had turned about strangely, as if content to spend any number of days in that underground hiding-place.

"There is such a thing as a fortunate accident," Master Lord replied gravely, "and in this struggle against the king we of the colonies who are weak in numbers as compared with the force he can bring against us, must ever be on the alert for some turn in affairs which will work to our advantage. It is true that at present there are so many lobster backs on duty at the Bridewell that you cannot hope to come at your comrade; but who shall say how soon the number of sentinels there may be lessened?"

"Have you enough influence among the lovers of the king to succeed in getting inside the Bridewell?"

Hiram asked in a placid tone, as if the matter was of but little importance to him, and I fancied Master Lord replied to the question eagerly, as if anxious we should have full faith in him, when if he had been a true man, so it seemed to me, there would have been no question in his mind as to the possibility of our doubting his intentions:

"I believe before many days have passed, aye, perhaps by to-morrow, I may be able to drop a hint to the lad that you are here in search of him."

"On what pretext could you get inside that portion of the Bridewell where the prisoners who were taken at Breed's hill are confined?" Hiram asked in the same quiet, indifferent tone.

"There are many people in Boston, and especially among the Tories, who are curious to see these so-called rebels; some in order to learn if perchance they may have acquaintances among them, and others to jeer at the unfortunates, reminding them how useless it is to struggle against the king's power. I can be of one party or the other; but the time must be ripe before it may be done. In other words, matters must have moved fortunately for me, when there are on guard those of the lobster backs with whom I am acquainted," and Master Lord spoke as if most eager to convince us of his loyalty. "In order to make myself of service to the Cause, it has been necessary to be friendly with these red-coated gentry who rule the town."

"Yes, I can well understand that," Hiram replied in a tone of content. "We know you will do for us all that lays in your power, and are ready to take your advice in the matter," Hiram went on as if the work we had set ourselves was of no especial importance, and my heart burned with anger

against him because of his seeming indifference. "In turning the matter over, I can see that from the standpoint of one who would do the greatest good to the greatest number, you cannot well afford to have this secret hiding-place of yours discovered, and we are not so selfish as to ask that you do other than seems to you wise. Go as far as you prudently can in our behalf, and then leave us to take our own way."

"You may be certain I shall not abandon the enterprise upon which you have come, so long as there appears any likelihood of success; but when one hits upon a stone wall it is wiser to go around, than to beat his head against the rocks. Therefore when it is shown that I can effect nothing, we will come to a stop; but until then trust in me."

"Indeed we do, Master Lord, thanking you not only for the willingness to aid us, but for the work in behalf of the Cause which you have already done."

I was so angry at hearing Hiram thus lay himself down at the feet of the man whom it surely seemed we had every reason to distrust, that I could have risen up against him, crying out all which was in my mind; but, fortunately, I checked the words which were on the tip of my tongue, and threw myself sulkily upon one of the beds, vowing mentally that never again would I put faith in any human being howsoever fair might be his speech.

Then it was that Master Lord set about discussing plans for the future as if we were like to remain in that under-ground hiding-place many a long day, while Archie and Harvey listened to the conversation in seeming bewilderment, failing to understand, even as did I, this complete change in

him whom we had come to look upon as the leader in our hazardous venture.

I cannot set down all these two said, for the very good reason that I failed to charge myself with taking in the purport of the conversation; but this I do know, that when they had come apparently to understand each other, and were grown to be as thick as two thieves, Master Lord explained that in order we might remain more securely hidden from suspicion, and that none of the neighbors should come to fancy he had visitors in the building, we must prepare our own food, cooking it in the fire-place of the cellar.

By such a course the house would remain open to whosoever might visit it, and unless the secret of our hiding-place was revealed by our haste, we were as safe in Boston town as in any other place, meaning, of course, in event of Job Lord's proving to be a true man as he claimed to be.

To all of this Hiram agreed as if satisfied in every particular, and then claimed to be prodigiously hungry, which was another surprise on his part, for we had even then with us enough of provision to satisfy all our desires during the next four and twenty hours.

However, Hiram clung to the assertion that he was nigh to being famished, and Master Lord went without delay to the floor above, as if to procure that which might be needed.

No sooner had he ascended the ladder than I stole softly to Hiram's side, asking in an angry whisper:

"What has come upon you so suddenly, that you fail to see anything suspicious in our being thus asked to lay here content with what that man may be

able to do, never ourselves raising a hand in behalf of Silas?"

"Yes, it seems as if I had not broken my fast for four and twenty hours," Hiram replied in a loud tone, at the same time motioning toward the floor above, as if to say that he would not converse with me however guardedly, while Master Lord was where he might come to believe we were holding secret council.

This gesture of our comrade's soothed me somewhat, for I began to fancy he had a plan in his mind to thwart our host if so be he gave token of treachery, and yet I failed to understand how it might be done while we remained there much the same as prisoners. In my stupidity I lost sight of the fact that we were absolutely powerless. If this Job Lord was indeed double-faced, then at the moment we ventured out despite his advice, it was only necessary for him to give word to the lobster backs, when we would, perhaps, come upon Silas by being ourselves made prisoners.

So far as ministering to our wants was concerned, Master Lord showed himself most generous. After ascending and descending half a dozen times, he had on the table before us an ample supply of corn meal, salt pork, and, what was indeed a rarity, a leg of freshly-killed lamb, and this at a time when our people in Cambridge believed the rank and file of the king's army were living upon salt food, because of our having shut off their supplies from the country roundabout.

In addition, Master Lord brought a jar of whale oil, which I myself knew had been hard to come upon in Boston, even before the butchery at Lexington; but he must have been plentifully supplied, for

he insisted we use it freely, saying it was not well for us to remain in darkness, and that we should strive to make our gloomy quarters as comfortable as possible.

"There is no good reason why you should not enjoy yourselves so far as may be," he said in the most friendly of tones when he had laid before us the last of the supplies. "Until the time for action comes, you can do no less than remain here, and it is well to be content in mind, trusting that I will give the signal at the first moment anything may be done to aid your comrade."

Then, looking about him scrutinizingly as if to make certain he had forgotten nothing, he turned and went up the ladder, halting when nigh to the top, and saying:

"You can understand that every precaution against discovery of this place must be taken, therefore it is that I bolt the trap down, covering it afterward with such things as can most handily be come at in my kitchen, so that one may not see where the timbers are sawn apart."

He was striving to explain why we were kept close prisoners, and again my anger rose, for I failed to understand if the trap-door was covered and screened from view of any who might enter the room above, why it should be bolted so that we might not raise it in case of an emergency.

After we had been thus closely confined beyond all hope of leaving the place, and could hear Master Lord moving about the room above, I strove once more to have an explanation with Hiram; but again he motioned toward the ceiling, although this time, clutching me by the shoulders, he drew my ear close to his lips as he whispered:

"Take station just beneath where the side door which leads into the room above is located, and there do your best to learn whether any come in, or if our exceedingly good friend goes out."

Then he set about making ready the meal, in which work every convenience, including a spit, was to be found near the fire-place, and meanwhile talking so loudly regarding his hunger and our good fortune in finding so secure a hiding-place, that Master Lord himself must have been able to hear distinctly some of his words.

Because he gave no warning that we should remain silent, were my suspicions regarding his loyalty increased, for if peradventure our presence there must be kept a profound secret from everybody, then should he have checked Hiram, since in event of a Tory or a lobster back entering the building, our comrade's voice would be heard.

However, I went to that part of the room as nearly under the door of the building as I could judge, and there took my station as Hiram directed, feeling certain now that he had in mind some plan for the discovery of Master Lord's real intention.

I had not been thus endeavoring to play the eavesdropper above half an hour, and the leg of lamb on the spit was sending forth a most appetizing odor, when I distinctly heard the door above open, and then came to my ears the foot-falls of at least two, whom I judged to be men because of the heaviness with which they stepped.

Immediately afterward, and while we could hear the subdued hum of voices above, Hiram whispered to Archie that he and Harvey should attend to the cooking of the meat, then tapping me on the

shoulder with a gesture which I understood meant for me to follow.

Moving cautiously, in marked contrast to the loud tones in which he had spoken a few moments previous, Hiram began at the end of the cellar which was nearest the street, making a careful examination of the walls as if seeking some means of outlet, I copying his every movement.

Heavy logs, laid up with as much care as one would bestow in building the sides of a house, formed this refuge of ours, and I was saying to myself that if my comrade had any hope of finding a means of leaving the place without knowledge of Master Lord, then was he doomed to disappointment, when we were come to the fire-place, on one side of which stood mayhap half a dozen casks, as if carelessly stacked there out of the way.

Hiram motioned for me to bear a hand, and one by one we moved the casks. Setting each down upon the beaten earth which formed the floor so that not the slightest noise would be made, we cleared all away until what had the appearance of a rubbish hole was brought to view. One might have guessed that this had originally been made as an entrance to the cellar from the outside, and afterward closed up carelessly with rocks and earth, the casks having been set before the place as a screen.

There was a look of triumph on Hiram's face as he wriggled amid the rubbish, pushing aside a rock here and scraping away the earth there until his body was almost hidden from view.

Then, while I stood with bated breath believing we had found what would serve us in time of need, he appeared to have come to an end of his

exploration, for backing out, he straightway began brushing up the litter which had been pulled upon the floor, as carefully as a house-wife might have done, save that he used his hands instead of a broom.

More than once I made as if to ask what he had found further than I could see; but he gave me to understand that we must make no attempt at holding a conversation, and whispered that I go back to where it might be possible to learn when those who were above had left the building.

I did as he thus commanded; but my heart was lighter than at any time since we entered this prison-like hiding-place, for the belief was strong in my mind that if worse came to worse, and Master Lord was indeed the treacherous villain I believed him, we might be able to escape, so far as leaving the cellar was concerned.

While I remained by the wall, straining my ears to catch the lightest sound from above, Hiram continued his work as cook, and before the hum of conversation had ceased in the room over my head, the leg of lamb was done to a turn, while Griffin had ready for eating a tempting loaf of corn bread.

Then, somewhat to my surprise, after the food had been placed upon the table Hiram took my station by the wall, insisting that we three lads should partake of the meal, and because I was beginning now to have full faith that he was not allowing himself to be hood-winked by Master Lord, I did as commanded, although there was in my mind the idea that we might give over listening, at least during such time as would be necessary to satisfy our hunger.

Before we had come to an end of our eating it was possible to hear the outer door swung to with no little force, and there was a look of satisfaction upon Griffin's face as he joined us at the table.

"Unless my ears have played me false, the room above is empty. I heard at least three go out, and if only two entered when you were on duty, Luke, then we are alone in the building; but in order that we may take no chances, my advice is that none of us speak above a whisper."

"You think we have need of taking council together?" Archie asked, whereupon Hiram replied grimly:

"Aye, lad, if ever the time was that we needed to thrash out a matter in order to come upon the best road, surely it is now."

"Then you have come to believe that Master Lord is not such a friend to the Cause as he professes, even though the lieutenant at the battery declared he would trust the man with his life?" I asked.

"The lieutenant's eyes may have been shut just as Job Lord would shut ours," Hiram said with a smile, much as if it pleased him to have thus settled the matter in his own mind. "It must be that this man has done good service among our people, otherwise he would not have such a reputation for loyalty to the colony. But whatever he may have done in the past, it seems certain to me he is ready to play us false now."

"I fail to see why he need take any roundabout lane to get at such a knavish result," Harvey suggested. "If he counts to give us up to the lobster backs, it only needs that he call in the first squad

which comes past the building, for here we are like rats in a trap, ready to be taken whenever it is the pleasure of those who have caught us."

"I wish it might be possible for me to make that part of it plain in my mind," Hiram said thoughtfully. "I can figure out all else; but why it should be his purpose to keep us here any length of time, instead of delivering us up at once, is more than I can come at. Certain it is he's playing a game, and it remains for us to learn what it may be."

"And in the meanwhile what about Silas?" Archie asked, whereupon Hiram replied sharply, as if it vexed him because the lad would carry the conversation so far afield:

"He is no more a prisoner than we are, and until it is possible for us to get out of this place, at the same time finding some means of preventing Job Lord from giving the lobster backs warning of our whereabouts, we need not trouble our heads concerning him. I have no mind to arouse your fears, lad, and surely you can understand the situation as well as I; but to my thinking we would be safer shut up in the Bridewell, as prisoners of war, than here in the power of this man who claims to be devoted heart and soul to the Cause."

Such words silenced me. I had come to believe that Hiram could see treachery in Master Lord's course; but until this moment had no idea he believed the situation to be so desperate. It must have been that he saw what was very like to fear written on my face, for he added after a short pause:

"Nay, nay, lad, do not let me persuade you into making mountains out of mole hills; but let us not fall into the mistake of failing to see the mole hills.

You stood up bravely when we were on Breed's hill with three or four thousand lobster backs striving to kill us, and I saw no sign of fear on your face. Now we have but one man against us, and it will go hard indeed if we four cannot outwit the scoundrel, if scoundrel he be, providing he gives us time."

"But why should he give us time?" Harvey persisted, and again Hiram said:

"That's what puzzles me lad; but I am hoping to find out before many hours have passed. In the meanwhile, when he comes here it is for us to make him believe we are not only willing, but pleased to remain as he would have us. Do not let it appear that we have any suspicions of him whatsoever, but fall in with all he suggests, for indeed we can do no less while shut up here."

"If that rubbish hole leads outside, why may we not escape by means of it?" I asked, and the reply came promptly:

"Because we would be jumping from the frying pan into the fire. It is evidently not Master Lord's intention to deliver us over to the lobster backs yet a while, providing we remain quietly here as he desires; but let us once take to flight, as he would discover within an hour or more after we had gone, and our liberty is not worth a day's purchase. You can see plainly that if he is the traitor we are beginning to believe him, it would be impossible for us to find another hiding-place in this town which the Britishers could not discover."

"We are setting it down as a fact that this Job Lord, who has probably made many of our people believe him true to the Cause, is a traitor," Archie said thoughtfully, as if he had been turning the

matter over and over in his mind. "It seems to me that we should, until knowing to the contrary, at least put it in our reckoning that the chances are even he may be doing according to his professions. If that be the case, then we are making as much progress toward giving Silas aid as if we were on the outside; perhaps more, because Master Lord can succeed where we would fail."

"All of which means what?" I asked impatiently.

"That since we are powerless to do otherwise, but must remain here, let us say that perhaps matters are going as they should, which won't prevent keeping our eyes open to take advantage of any turn that may come in our favor."

It seemed as if all these words irritated Hiram, for, after having partaken sparingly of the appetizing food, he sprang to his feet with the air of one who has much work to perform.

"Give me your pocket-knife, Archie, and do you three lads remain at the table until it is impossible to eat more, for we who serve the Cause do not come upon such food often."

Archie did as was desired, and we all watched Hiram curiously as he began cutting cautiously at one of the crevices between the planks above our heads.

Not until he had been at work several moments did I come to understand what he would do, and then it flashed upon me that it was his purpose to make an aperture through which we might the better hear what was going on in the room above.

It was not reasonable to suppose he could cut away the planks to any extent without danger of his work being seen from above, and in fact, when

he stepped aside as if the task had been performed, it appeared to me that he had enlarged the crevice no more than an eighth of an inch, and that for a distance, mayhap, of half a finger's length.

Wetting his hand, he took from the fire-place a small quantity of ashes, making them into a paste, and this he rubbed over the freshly cut space until it had been darkened to a shade like unto the remainder of the flooring, while I, eager to aid in whatsoever of work was being done, picked up carefully each tiny shaving of wood, throwing them on the embers that they might be consumed.

Then Hiram went through the same operation at a place directly above the table, and within half an hour he had thus opened slight communication with the room above. There was not much reason for hoping these tiny apertures would serve the purpose for which they had been made; but yet there was a possibility we could hear better what was said or done by Master Lord's visitors, and to people in our situation every chance, however slight, must be caught at.

"Why not learn what we can about yonder rubbish hole?" I asked when Hiram seated himself at the table once more, as if there was nothing else which demanded attention.

"It is not well to make a try at going too far at one time," he replied with a certain air of content.

It was well I had not been looked upon as the leader of our little company, otherwise we might have come to grief even before we had well made a start toward arming ourselves against the possible treachery of Master Lord.

I would have continued the work which was be-

gun by making the apertures, in the rubbish hole, regarding not the possibility of an interruption; but should have hardly more than have commenced before our host returned, when most-like everything might have been discovered.

As it was, thanks to Hiram's precaution, we four were seated at the table in a most comfortable manner, as if having nothing on our minds save pleasure, when Job Lord, who must have come into the house with the utmost caution in order to learn what we might be about, raised the trap-door suddenly, peering down before venturing to descend.

There was no question after this but that he was minded to make certain we followed his advice, and thus sneaking into the house like a spy to catch us unawares was further proof that he meditated mischief.

For the life of me I could not have greeted the scoundrel in a friendly tone; but Hiram hailed him as if believing he was our best friend, and asked in a jovial tone that he come down and partake of the sumptuous dinner.

Master Lord looked well content with himself, which meant that he was satisfied we were minded to do as he bade us, when he descended the ladder and took seat in a most affable manner at the table.

"I have been out on your business," he said, helping himself to a slice of roasted lamb.

"And I dare venture to say you have done more in an hour than we four could have accomplished in a full week," Hiram added genially.

"Well, I may say we have got along famously this day," Master Lord replied in a jolly tone. "Thanks to my acquaintance among the lobster

backs, and their belief that I am devoted heart and soul to the king, it has been possible for me to enter that part of the Bridewell where the prisoners taken at Breed's hill are confined."

"Did you see Silas?" Harvey asked eagerly.

"There was but one boy in the place, and if so be your comrade is prisoner here, then have I seen him. It would have been ill advised had I attempted to get speech with him, because I was there professedly out of motives of curiosity, and took good care not to arouse suspicion by talking with any of the so-called rebels."

"Is the guard around the building as large as it was yesterday?" Hiram asked as if deeply interested, and having perfect confidence in what our host might tell him.

"As nearly as could be judged there has been no change; but I heard on the street that General Gage counts on advancing his outposts at Boston Neck with the idea of pushing our people back from Roxbury, in which case he will need all the men at his command, when I doubt not the guard at the Bridewell will be lessened."

"Then your opinion is the same as when we last talked together?" and Hiram urged Master Lord to partake more heartily of his own provisions.

"Aye, that seems to me wisest. In fact, there is nothing else for you to do, and surely you are comfortable here as any four so-called rebels to be found in the colony could be."

"That we are, sir, thanks to you, but for our having found this very agreeable hiding-place, which is guarded by a man so deeply devoted to the Cause, most-like we would be keeping our comrade company in the Bridewell by this time," and one

would have said from Hiram's tone that he firmly believed Master Lord was the only person in all this world who could have lent us aid. "We would be unwise as well as ungrateful should there be any thought in our minds of doing other than as you advise."

There is no need why I repeat all which was said between Job Lord and Hiram Griffin, for each was bent on deceiving the other, as it appeared to me, and the words which were spoken amounted to nothing, so far as our work of releasing Silas was concerned.

The result of it was, however, as I fancied, that Hiram succeeded in making Master Lord believe we had the fullest confidence in him, and at the same time was firmly convinced our host to be as thorough paced a scoundrel as when we had talked with him previously.

"It must not be that I spend all my time with you lads, pleasant though your company is," Master Lord said after having made a hearty meal, and at the same time satisfied himself that we were not meditating any move other than as he directed. "I must pick up all the information I can concerning General Gage's intentions to advance on the outposts at the Neck, in order that word be sent to Cambridge without delay; therefore it is necessary I go abroad for a while."

"Do as you would if we were not here," Hiram replied, "and above all, neglect not the work of the Cause in order to show your kindly disposition toward us."

Then after a few more friendly, and, as I believed, false words, Master Lord ascended the ladder; the trap-door was shut and bolted, and

while this was being done Hiram clambered upon the table softly that he might approach his ear to the aperture made in the floor, motioning me to take my former station, while Archie clambered up on a stool to hear what he might from the other crevice.

Between us all we contrived to make out with reasonably certainty when our host, having moved about the room a few minutes as if searching for something, left the building, locking the door behind him, and after mayhap five minutes had passed in silence, Hiram said in a low tone as he came down from his perch:

"I'm allowing the worthy Master Lord will remain abroad, striving earnestly to aid the Cause, for at least an hour, and during such time, if you lads are so disposed, we will see what may be done with that rubbish hole, which, as I believe, points out to us the fairest road we could have for the thwarting of treacherous schemes."

You can fancy with what eagerness I set about removing the casks, believing we might speedily effect our purpose; but it was not in Hiram's mind that we should be rash.

"Fair and softly, lad, else by too much haste you spoil the whole broth. That which chokes the passage must be disposed of if we would count on opening it, and where do you reckon we may put what is taken out, so that when our host visits us again he shall see no signs of our labor?"

I had shown myself thick-headed many a time before; but never so dull as now when I would have begun pulling out the rubbish without means of hiding it, and I stepped back in despair, not understanding how we might at the same time remove and keep it hidden from view.

It seems that Hiram had already been making plans to such end, for he at once began taking out some of the larger stones, and stowing them in two of the casks from which the heads had been removed.

"We can get rid of considerable in this way, and after that much has been done it may be possible to pack the earth down so closely that we can drive a tunnel through," he said, working energetically, and we three lads, understanding what was in his mind, lost no time in bearing a hand.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SECRET PASSAGE

FORTUNATELY for us all the casks save two were unheaded, and these we filled in short order, for it can well be supposed that every one worked with utmost speed, not knowing how soon Job Lord might take it into his head to return.

Once filled, they were placed in front of the rubbish hole very nearly in the same position, save in so far that a narrow passage was left behind them, through which we might, with some difficulty, force ourselves.

On top of these, especially in order to prevent our host from seeing what had been done, the two unheaded casks were placed, and then Job Lord must have been keen-eyed indeed to have observed any change at that portion of the room.

It was Hiram who had remained inside the passage, passing out rocks or clods of earth, and when we had come thus far in our labor he decided it would be safer to cease work a short time, lest he who was apparently holding us prisoners should succeed in returning secretly.

"How far have you got toward the outside?" I asked as Hiram came from behind the casks, brushing his clothing carefully, and washing his hands that no token of the labor could be seen when next our host visited us.

"I am of the belief that we have made what

you might call a tunnel straight through, and within a dozen inches of the surface," he replied. "I had no means of guessing as to the distance, except by taking the flooring of the building as being well on the level, and from that I feel positive I had made my way upward to a point equal in height to the last rung of the ladder. The question that bothers me is, how we can break through the crust of earth without leaving behind token of what has been done?"

"Why should we care whether any person saw how we escaped?" Archie asked in bewilderment. "Once Job Lord fails to find us he will know we have gone, and it matters little how soon he discovers the tunnel."

"Aye, if so be we counted on taking to our heels at once; but there is in my mind an idea that we may play this double-faced Master Lord a reasonably neat trick. It is agreed that we want to stay in Boston until it is possible to aid Silas, or we have come to know that nothing can be done, and where could we find a better hiding-place than this?"

"But surely we can't count on going in and out at our pleasure, for the chances would be against us. Master Lord might come at any time, and when we attempted to return the jig would be up."

"As to that I am not certain," Hiram said as, having removed all traces of the work from his person, he seated himself at the table evidently ready to enter into an argument should any of us dispute his proposition. "While working in the tunnel the idea came to me that if we carried the digging through successfully, one of us might be on the outside, and Master Lord fail to discover the fact even if he paid us a visit."

"How do you make that out?" Harvey asked incredulously.

"Suppose, for instance, Luke ventured outside through the passage-way, if so be we can hit upon a plan of preventing the end of the tunnel from being seen on the surface. Now then, it should not be a very difficult job for us to rig up a dummy which would have somewhat the appearance of a lad lying on the bed as if asleep. Then we will say that you, Harvey, lie down beside the figure, pretending to be asleep. Master Lord comes; finds Archie and me sitting here at the table; glances at the bed, sees Harvey's face, and also what appears to be Luke's head. Think you he would have any suspicion that matters were wrong?"

"But suppose he did?" I insisted, determined to understand all the possibilities of Hiram's scheme; but not allowing that it might be put through successfully.

"Well, we will suppose his suspicions are aroused, and he goes over to the bed to make certain Luke is there. How much worse off are we in case he discovers the trick? We know him to be our enemy, regardless of the confidence which our people may put in him, and it is also a fact that we are bound to keep our eyes open for the first move he shall make, because the end of this matter, from his point of view, is our capture by the Britishers when the time comes that all his purposes are served."

"Well, what then?" I demanded impatiently. "Once he has made the discovery that I am outside, can you prevent him raising an alarm, and thus bringing the lobster backs upon those who are inside?"

"Aye, that seems to me a very simple matter," Hiram replied. "The moment our double-faced friend went toward the dummy to make certain he had been tricked, our plan would be to fall upon him, and I'll eat my head if the three of us can't truss him up like a fowl ready for the roasting, however much of a fight he may make."

"Well, and if we have him prisoner, what then?"

"We'll simply hold him here until we get ready to leave town, and I'm thinking that won't be any difficult matter," Hiram said laughingly. "With him bound hand and foot, and one of us ready to plump a gag in his mouth if he makes too much noise in the way of calling for assistance, it seems to me he would be about as harmless as a kitten in a cage. As a matter of fact, it is very nearly what we must do finally, for I am not counting to take to my heels through yonder passage, leaving him behind free to give word to the lobster backs that we are somewhere in the town, or striving to get out of it. We are in such a box, lads, that it would be worse than useless to hesitate at anything which promises, however slightly, to aid us," and now Hiram spoke in a grave tone, as does one who speculates upon some hazardous venture. "We shall not be able to leave this place without having a tussle with Master Lord, and no one can say how soon that may be necessary, therefore I hold to it we are warranted in taking many chances, if so be we are working toward the end that we set ourselves when leaving Cambridge. Even though we may not hold this place as a refuge eight and forty hours before the trick is discovered, then have we gained just so much time."

I could think of no argument against this plan of Hiram's, ponder over it as I might. We were in desperate straits, and all of us knew full well that the danger would not be so great when Master Lord had discovered that we had a means of escape, providing we could hold him prisoner, than if he remained in ignorance of our purpose and at liberty to set the lobster backs on us whenever he chose.

"The only thing against your plan, Hiram, is that which you yourself have confessed," Archie said thoughtfully. "The difficulty of concealing the mouth of the tunnel after one of us has made his way through it."

"Aye, there's the rub, lad; but it strikes me that 'twixt the four of us, seeing's how we have all got some share of common-sense, we ought to be able to overcome that trouble in course of time. I cannot say just now what way it may be done; but we will hit upon an idea lads, we'll hit upon an idea."

It may seem that this slight change in the situation was not so favorable to our enterprise as to warrant very much in the way of rejoicing, and yet I felt more nearly light-hearted after Hiram was at an end of explaining what he had done, and how the tunnel might be made to serve us, than at any time since I left Cambridge, although I am bound to confess we were no nearer accomplishing our purpose because of this secret passage, than before. In fact, we had simply succeeded in entering the town, and then plunged ourselves into greater difficulties than ever, therefore it is possible the means of escape was simply a step toward righting the mistake that had been made.

Then it was that Harvey asked suddenly, as if it was a matter of great moment:

"Who knows whether it yet be day, or has the night come?"

As a matter of course we had lost all knowledge of time, shut up in that cellar where no ray of light penetrated, sleeping and eating as our desires prompted, and now the question had been raised I grew keen to know whether another night had come, or if we had been there as prisoners less than four and twenty hours.

"It was nearabout midnight when we came into this place," Hiram replied to Harvey's question, as if still working out a problem in his mind. "We spent much time with Master Lord; let us say until daybreak. Then we slept, and the chances are it must have been near to another night fall when we were awakened by a racket overhead. I'm allowing it was the next night after our arrival, perhaps late in the evening, when our double-faced host brought us the provisions, and that we most-like have spent one entire night eating and working on the tunnel. Therefore to my mind it is some time in the second day after our arrival. Surely it cannot be very late in the night, else would Master Lord have returned."

All this seemed good reasoning, and yet now that we had seemingly settled the matter, of what did it avail us? What mattered whether the sun was shining, or the earth shrouded in darkness, so that we dared not venture out in either case?

Hiram speedily settled this matter, as in fact he did every one we discussed, by asking:

"What say you to my making our first venture through the secret passage after that scoundrel who professes to be working in our interests, visits us the next time?"

"Meaning that you would go out whether it was night or day?" Archie asked.

"Surely not, lad; but I am allowing we can so far trust him as to take for granted what he tells us as to the time. Now if I am guessing rightly, he will come back in the evening, and there is no good reason why he should not say what is o'clock when we put the question. It ought to be possible for us to learn whether he goes to bed, or ventures out again, and if it so chances that he turns in, I will try the secret passage."

"When you made the holes in the floor for the purpose of hearing what might be going on in the room above, did you realize that they would serve to let him know what we are doing?" Harvey asked, and Hiram's reply was a cheery one:

"Aye, that I did, lad; but I'm not minded he shall get any advantage because of them, since it won't be a great exertion to plug the holes with rags."

It was evident that Hiram had given more thought to the situation, and to the possibility of turning it to our advantage, than had any of us. From that moment I was well content to do as he suggested, save in one particular, and that was as to which of us should make the first venture, therefore I demanded to know why he claimed the right.

"Because in the first place, so far as the lobster backs know, I haven't been mixed up in the doings of the Minute Boys as have the rest of you."

"How do you make that out?" Archie cried sharply. "Seth Jepson has told the Britishers all he knows, and your name has been put down with the others."

"Seeing's how I am the least known in this town of Boston, it strikes me there is nobody who can

go out with less danger than myself," Hiram declared, and straightway I put an end to his pretensions by saying:

"You would not be able to effect one half as much as any of us three, because of being unacquainted with the town and the people. Besides, you would be missed more quickly by Master Lord; the chances are if he should come, and you were asleep, he would insist upon awakening you, for you have acted as spokesman all the way through this business. Now I am the one who has the right to go, and I can be of more service than any other."

As a matter of course all hands insisted on knowing upon what I based my claims, and I put the matter plainly, perhaps with some show of arrogance:

"In the first place because I was chosen captain of the Minute Boys, which gives me the right to say what shall or shall not be done; then again I am as well acquainted with the people in this town as any other, knowing who may be trusted and whom we need fear."

"What would you do in case we agreed you should be the first to venture out?" Hiram asked, and I could well understand that he was inclined to believe me in the right.

"First I would go to my own home, and it would be safe to do so because no one save Master Lord has any idea that I am in town. My mother must know somewhat of the doings hereabouts since we left, and may be able to give valuable information."

"Is that all?" Archie asked as if he considered my plan to be of little importance so far as the work of releasing Silas was concerned.

"I would take advice from her as to who among the men known to love the Cause, it would be safe

for me to visit, and to such person give full information of how we are situated, and what we strive to accomplish. That I fancy is as much as any one of us can do in a single night."

Archie would have had more to say regarding the matter, as I could understand from the expression on his face; but just at that moment the outer door was heard to open noisily and close with a bang, after which it seemed as if we could hear whoever had entered barring it behind him, and Hiram whispered softly to me:

"Get you on the further side of the bed, and let Harvey lie down beside you. Keep your face turned to the wall, as if you were the dummy of which we have spoken."

I understood that now he would make an experiment of the plan which he had suggested, and as softly as might be I followed his instructions, repeating them to Harvey.

In a twinkling we two lads were disposed of, I smothering my face in the blanket while my companion lay facing the table, and in a very short time after these preparations had been made the trap-door was opened.

Master Lord came down the ladder with a noisy welcome, as if it pleased him to see us thus apparently contented, and before he had an opportunity to make any remark, Hiram asked in a tone of curiosity:

"May it be night or day, Master Lord? We have been shut in here so long without seeing a ray of light that it has come to be a matter of no little importance to us."

"It is nigh to nine of the clock, when all found loitering on the street without a pass will be taken

into custody, else I would have remained abroad later, for I am hoping most earnestly to seek out some way by which you can aid your comrade."

"Was it last night that we came here?" Hiram continued, as if prompted solely by curiosity.

"Not so; nearly eight and forty hours have passed since you arrived."

"Hiram guessed rightly, as he nearly always contrives to do," I said to myself, and then Master Lord asked:

"Why are you so interested in the time of day? Since you must perforce remain here idle while I am cutting out the work for you, it is of no especial importance whether the sun or the moon is shining."

"Aye, that may be," Hiram replied reflectively; "but you see yonder sleepy heads declared they would turn in because another night had surely come, and I was trying to persuade them they would be spending the day in slumber, which as I look at the matter is wrong, even though we may not venture out."

Master Lord appeared to be content with this explanation, and at once began telling of what he had heard on the street regarding General Gage's probable plans, giving no very important news save the fact that our people were sending troops to this post and that in the work of besieging the town, and it was understood by the Britishers that they were much the same as held fast, without means of leaving Boston, save they chose to beat a retreat by water.

"It stands to reason General Gage could not do anything of that kind, however much he might desire it," our double-faced host explained. "It is

true he is not advancing the king's work by staying here, yet to evacuate the town would be to admit that the Americans had beaten him by that victory which he claims at Breed's hill."

Then he went on with a lot of words intended, as I fancied, rather to keep us quiet in mind than for any other purpose, and, giving but little heed to his talk, I tried in vain to guess why he wished to hold us in this place rather than turn all four over to the Britishers immediately, as I doubted not but that he intended to do finally.

He remained mayhap half an hour talking with Hiram, for neither Harvey nor Archie ventured to take part in the conversation, and giving no heed to me. If the dummy we proposed to make had been in my place, and I on the outside, he would have remained in ignorance of the fact.

"If he could thus be deceived once, why not twice or thrice?" and I said to myself that Hiram Griffin had worked out a plan as nearly perfect as anything of the kind could be reckoned.

When Master Lord had ascended to the upper floor, and closed and bolted the door to make certain we could not give him the slip, Hiram crept like a cat upon the table, pressing his ear against one of the apertures. He stood there as it seemed to me a full hour before he came down as cautiously as before, and leaned over the bed where I lay, to whisper softly in my ear:

"After I have plugged up the holes, lad, it is time for you to get to work, if so be you are minded to make the venture as was agreed upon."

Minded? I was burning with the desire to set out, foolishly believing that once I was free in the streets of Boston town, it would not only be possible

for me to avoid the patrol, but I could do very much toward that release of Silas Brownrigg's on which we had set our hearts.

Not until Hiram had filled the two small apertures with pieces of cloth torn from his shirt, did I make any move, and then it can well be fancied that I strove to rise from the bed without noise.

Hiram was already wrapping his coat around a large rock taken from one of the casks, which as I understood was intended to represent my head, and when this had been placed upon the bed, he made a roll of blankets to form the body. Over this he threw a second blanket, and if so be the light was dim, I believed, as I stood near the table where Master Lord would naturally come if he should pay us a visit during the night, that it was a fair resemblance to myself as he had just seen me.

"I'm allowing that you can make your way out after five minutes of digging," Hiram whispered to me, and then came to my mind the one important question which we had failed to settle.

"How shall I cover the hole?"

"That is for you to decide after getting out. My idea is that the turf may be thrown up in such a way that it can be replaced, and yet I question much whether it is of any very great importance to conceal the mouth of the tunnel during such time as you may be absent, for why should any person, much less Job Lord, be prowling around the rear of this building in the night?"

With this Hiram dismissed the matter as if believing it was not a vital one, and instructed me as to how the first portion of the work should be performed. He was to stand on the table, having pulled out the plug of cloth from one of the aper-

tures, where it might be possible to hear what was going on overhead. Archie would take station a few feet distant, toward the casks, while Harvey remained close by the rubbish hole. Then if Hiram heard any suspicious sounds he would motion to the one nearest, who could in turn let the next sentinel know, and this last might warn me to keep quiet in the tunnel. If perchance Master Lord did come down into the room, because of being suspicious, or in order to hold any further converse, I must stay in the passage, and the dummy play my part the same as if I had gained the outside.

When all this had been decided upon and understood, the lads stationed themselves, and I crept into the tunnel, finding the passage so very much narrower than I had counted upon that already was I beginning to fear I might, through clumsiness, so wedge myself in that it would be impossible to advance or retreat.

That, however, was one of the chances which must be taken, if we would get about the work in the only manner that promised success, and I wriggled my way upward until having come to where the earth was seemingly solid above my head, on the alert meanwhile for a signal from Harvey which should tell of danger in the rear.

Without delay, and yet not hastily lest by too much speed a blunder be made, I scraped away the dirt from above my head, allowing it to fall wheresoever it would, until I could feel the roots of the grass, and knew I was come to the turf.

Then, feeling carefully around at the very edge, so that I might force it upward in such a manner as to form a lid that would drop back into place again, I pressed with all my strength.

The roots of the grass tore asunder; a draft of fresh air struck upon my face, and, looking upward, I could see stars twinkling in the sky in a most friendly fashion, as it seemed to me.

Within sixty seconds I was standing erect in the rear of the building which Master Lord counted to be our prison, free to go whithersoever I would, so that I kept myself clear from the patrol and did not blunder upon too many Tories.

I had in the belt by my side the knife of which I have already spoken, and it was the only weapon which I could carry while making a way through the narrow tunnel; but this I was determined to use with deadly intent if peradventure I should come upon only one, or mayhap two enemies who recognized me, and I believe of a verity that, excited and desperate as I was become, it would have been possible for me to have fought for liberty with the energy of half a dozen lads.

It can well be fancied that I did not stand many seconds in the open talking with myself as to what I would do in case of a pinch. It seemed to me the most dangerous portion of my undertaking was to slip past the building without being overheard by Master Lord, and I flattered myself that no Indian on the war path ever moved more noiselessly than I, until having gained Long lane.

Even while making my way through the tunnel I had mapped out the course to be pursued, which was that I would cross the vacant land from Long lane to the corner of Bishop's alley and Milk street, after which it would be necessary to take my chances of coming upon the patrol. I counted even on going as near the governor's house as Old South Church, and from thence boldly down Corn hill,

passing dangerously near the prison until coming to Dock square. As to the rest of the journey, I said to myself it should be determined by chance.

Once at a safe distance from Master Lord's house I walked rapidly, keeping my ears wide open, as you can well suppose, for any sound of the patrol, until I was come to Milk street, and from thence on my heart was literally in my mouth, for then I was in that part of the town where I must reasonably expect to come upon enemies.

Twice I was within a hair's-breadth of being discovered by the patrol, but it seemed as if fortune favored me on this venture, for each time when the sound of their footfalls came to my ears I was nigh a convenient hiding-place, either in a garden or at the rear of some building, and although it may seem impossible that the trick could have been turned so readily, I passed through Dock square and gained Union street without having come face to face with a single person.

Then it was that I steered a course for the water mill, and thence kept on along the shore of the mill pond, where was less danger of coming in contact with a lobster back, and after that the way was, as you might say, plain sailing.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the venture thus far, was when I strove to awaken my mother without attracting the attention of the neighbors. She, dear soul, had secured every door and window lest thieves might break in and steal what little of property the Britishers had left us, and more than once did I half turn as if to depart, believing I was courting too much of danger in thus striving to have speech with her.

Fortunately, however, I continued my efforts

sufficiently long to arouse the dear woman, and heard in a low, frightened tone from inside, the question as to who was demanding entrance.

It goes without saying that the door was opened very suddenly when I whispered my name, and on feeling her arms around me I was so heartened that it seemed as if I could successfully encounter any ordinary number of Tories or red-coats who might seek to make me prisoner.

She would have cried out against it when I told her for what purpose we had come to Boston town, and I knew full well that if I had explained the dangers to which we were exposed, even while under the supposed care of Job Lord, she would have begged and insisted so strenuously for us to give over that which had in it so much of hazard, that I might not have prevailed against her.

I contented myself with telling her how we had chanced to come upon this Master Lord, and repeated what had been said concerning his loyalty to the Cause, thereby giving her to believe we were in perfect security while remaining at his dwelling, all of which went far toward calming her fears. It was what you might call deceiving one's mother, and yet I believed that under the circumstances was I fully warranted in so doing, otherwise had I left her as I must, she would have eaten her heart out with anxiety and forebodings.

To her mind it was not possible we could do anything whatsoever in aid of Silas. She had heard from our friends that the prisoners taken at Breed's hill were closely guarded; that none save those who were known to be of the king's side could even so much as have a glimpse of them, and knowing I

could not remain in town very long without being taken into custody, instead of pleading that I remain with her, she begged me to go with all speed to Cambridge.

Explaining that I would have speech with some man who was devoted to the Cause and yet remained in Boston, she proposed that I go to Master William Mansfield, who lived in Mackrell lane, for he was one who had proven himself a true son of the colony, having staid in town because of lameness in the leg which prevented him from serving as a soldier.

I remained with my mother not more than half an hour, although it would have pleased me right well could I have staid there until break of day; but time was exceedingly precious if I would save my own skin as well as that of my comrades, and I hastened away, counting to do no more than have a plain talk with Master Mansfield before going back to the hiding-place which was a prison, knowing full well that the lads there must be filled with apprehension and fear as the moments went by, lest I might have been taken into custody, thus bringing about discovery of the secret passage.

Now, because of having succeeded so well thus far in my mission it may be I grew careless, although even to this day it seems as if I exercised every caution while on the way from my home to Mackrell lane.

Certain it was, however, that on going up Ann street to the town dock I failed to hear the sound of footsteps behind me, until a hand was laid on my shoulder, and a disagreeably familiar voice cried in a tone as of triumph:

"After what was done at Hog island, and then at Breed's hill, have you the courage to come into this town, Luke Wright?"

I wheeled suddenly as you may fancy, and it was as if the very blood grew chill in my veins when I saw that he who had spoken was none other than the traitorous cur, Seth Jepson.

CHAPTER XV

AN AWKWARD CAPTURE

I WAS thoroughly dazed at having let myself be come upon by the one lad in town who could do me the most mischief. It was literally impossible to speak for a full minute, and during such time as I remained staring stupidly into the lad's face there ran through my mind like a flash of lightning all it was possible for him to do, not only against myself, but those I had left behind in the cellar of Job Lord's house.

It is true that the Tory cur had then no means of knowing whether others had come into the town with me; but should he give an alarm and I be taken into custody, as must surely follow, then would that host of ours who claimed to be such a devoted friend to the Cause, make known the contents of his cellar in order to have a share in the credit of capturing "rebels."

I realized almost as soon as the scoundrel had spoken, that we two must not part; that the safety of all our little company depended upon my silencing him in some way; but how might it be done save at the expense of killing? Even though his death would have been of benefit to the Cause, I could not find it in my heart to do that which seemed much the same as murder.

"I little expected to find you at large in the streets of this town," Seth said in what he meant to

be a jeering tone, but, with all my senses on the alert because of the imminence of the danger, I noticed that he looked uneasily out of the tail of his eye as if having it in mind to give me the slip, and this, as you may suppose, heartened me, although even while I stood gazing at him did I realize that he was simply casting about in his mind for some means whereby he might take advantage of thus meeting with me.

I answered boldly enough, however, and was well pleased to continue the conversation sufficiently long to have an opportunity of deciding upon my course of action, therefore said:

"Will you tell me how long since I have not had the privilege of walking the streets of Boston town, Seth Jepson?"

"That's a question easily answered. You lost the right when you attacked the king's men off Hog island."

"Well, and what did you lose when you showed yourself not only a traitor to the Cause, but a cur, gaining the confidence of your comrades only that you might betray them to a British prison? Can such as you walk the streets freely while I, who have made no pretense of being other than what your governor calls a rebel, must remain in hiding?"

"It is the duty of every true man, as well as lad, to serve the king, and there can be no such thing as treachery when one works in behalf of his lawful sovereign," Seth replied, wincing and raising his arm before his face as if thinking I counted on striking him.

"The lawful sovereign of these colonies is whosoever the people shall choose to be their ruler, and

the time is speedily coming, Seth Jepson, when the lobster backs will be driven out of Boston. After that has been done you will be called upon to settle with the Minute Boys, and I assure you the debt won't be easily paid."

I was deliberately striving to work myself up into a fury that I might strike the cur senseless with a blow, taking the chance of killing him, for as the seconds sped I realized how great was our danger unless his tongue could be silenced.

He must have seen something of this in my face, for he wheeled about suddenly, crying at the full strength of his lungs as he attempted to flee:

"Murder! murder!"

He had no time to make further outcry, for as soon as the word was repeated I clutched him by the throat from behind, dragging him backward, and burying my fingers so deeply in his neck that he was like to be strangled.

It was only when his eyes bulged out and his tongue protruded, as after the hangman has finished his work, that I realized I was within an ace of taking a human life. Then I released my hold; kneeling on his breast, I pinned both his arms down to the ground so that he had no opportunity of escaping, or making an attack upon me.

No sooner had I done this, and he began to breathe more freely, than I realized that by my assault I had increased the danger, for surely, even at that time of night, those living near about must have heard that shrill, frantic cry.

To leave him now in condition to follow me, would be the greatest folly of all, and acting upon the impulse of the moment I clutched him by the collar, dragging the cur to his feet as if he had been

of no more weight than a baby. Then I forced him on before me down Union street toward the mill pond as I said sharply, yet in a cautious tone, while I withdrew my knife from its sheath that he might see I had a weapon:

"I'm not minded you shall send me to a British prison, Seth Jepson, and I swear solemnly that if you raise your voice above a whisper, or fail to run at your best pace, I'll thrust this knife into your heart with the certainty of killing you."

"Would you do murder?" he asked in a hoarse whisper, and I knew from the tremor of his voice that he was in an agony of fear.

"It will not be murder to kill such as you, and I shall have no hesitation in doing so unless you obey every command promptly."

During such time as we had been speaking the pace was not slackened, and that the cowardly cur had lost all heart, I understood when he forged ahead at his best speed, as if believing implicitly in the threat I had made.

Running swiftly we were soon on the shore of the mill pond, having arrived without seeing or hearing anything to betoken pursuit, and believing it safe to slacken the pace that I might reserve my strength in case we were come to that pass where I must release the prisoner in order to save my own skin, I allowed the Tory cur to walk, but took good care to keep a firm grip on his collar as I mentally asked myself how it would be possible to rid myself of the prisoner with due regard to safety.

I began to realize that I had made an awkward capture; that I had under my hand one whom I dared not set free, and could not take with me. It was a most perplexing situation, and during a few

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seconds I well nigh lost heart because of having thus plunged my comrades into yet greater difficulties.

Yet what other could I have done? If, when he accosted me, I had turned to flee, he would have followed, and within two or three minutes a score of lobster backs must have been on my trail, when there could be no chance of escape. My only safety lay in holding fast to him, and yet by so doing was I increasing the peril.

He must have fancied I had grown faint-hearted to a certain degree, for as we walked on by the shore of the mill pond, he obeying every motion of mine as does a dog that has been whipped, the scoundrel began to whimper, being fool enough to think that by the use of soft words he could make his standing good once more.

"You do me wrong, Luke Wright, when you believe I led the Britishers up to Barton's point that night you were embarking for Hog island."

"Who has accused you of doing that?" I cried, giving way to temper because he should believe he might make excuses for his treachery.

"You have much the same as said so," he whined. "Because I was forced to go home for ever so short a time, having forgotten to do what my mother bade me, you immediately cried out that I was a traitor."

"How know you that, Seth Jepson, unless it be that you did play us false, and how was it you returned in company with the Britishers?"

"I didn't," Seth replied, not speaking as an honest lad would; but rather like a knave who is too thoroughly frightened to be able to tell a falsehood that can be believed. "The Britishers were there when I came up."

"We were but a short distance from the shore when you returned in their company, and heard the conversation that was held while you were accused of having brought them on a false scent," I cried hotly, and then realizing that no good could come from thus bandying words when at any moment we might come upon the patrol, I said sharply, forcing him once more into a run:

"You are to hold your tongue from this out, or as I live this knife shall find its way into your back."

"I will do whatsoever you say, so that you spare my life," he whined, and I could have kicked him for failing to show the spirit of a decent lad.

Not knowing whithersoever I ought to go; but having in mind a clear idea that I must make my way so far out of the town as to lessen the danger of coming upon a squad of lobster backs, I pushed him on until we were come to Boling Green, and then made a straight cut across Cambridge street, heading for Beacon hill at a smart pace until we were 'twixt there and the rope walk, where it seemed to me we were past the danger line for the time being.

Then it was I did a mighty deal of thinking. The first plan I formed was to cross over to the western shore of the town with the poor hope of finding there a skiff in which I might make way to Cambridge with my prisoner, even though in so doing I should be abandoning my comrades who, if I failed to return before daylight, would be set upon by Master Lord in whatsoever way he purposed to deal with them.

The thought that I would thus be purchasing my own safety, if indeed I was lucky enough to come upon a skiff on the shore, at the expense of my com-

rades shamed me, and, pulling Seth sharply around to the left, I continued at a yet swifter pace down past the powder house, across the Common, my brain in such a whirl that it seemed I must of necessity go once more to Cow lane.

By this time little clouds had begun to gather in the sky, so that the night was darker than it had been when I set out, and as we came to the end of Hog alley I believed it safe to stop there an instant in order to regain my breath, for now both captive and captor were breathing heavily.

Here, as we crouched within the shadow of an outhouse, Seth began his whining once more; but I cut him short with an extra twist in the collar of his shirt, at the same time warning him in a whisper that my knife would find its place in his back if he dared speak one word, however cautiously.

Now was come the time when I must decide upon what should be done, and, despite the danger, in my perplexity I decided to take the chances of regaining Master Lord's dwelling, saying to myself that the only hope remaining was to get Seth into that place of refuge which was at the same time our prison. Once there Hiram Griffin could decide whether we would not be warranted in turning our backs upon the mission which had brought us to Boston town, and make every effort to gain Cambridge with the prisoner.

It was a wondrous relief to have settled upon some plan, however poor and desperate, and without further loss of time I pushed Seth on once more, vowing that we should not slacken pace, unless it might be to avoid the patrol, until having come to Cow lane.

Down through the alley, across Newbury street;

through the gardens there to Short street, and thence on to Blind lane; past the New South Church, and down Summer street, finally coming to our destination.

Even as I set this down it seems wondrous strange that we could have come thus far, and for a certain distance through a settled portion of the town, without having seen or heard anything of life. Yet such was indeed the case, else I had not been here to tell this poor story of our Minute Boys of Boston, for had we been captured while I held Seth Jepson in my power, then was the end speedily come for me, because every Tory in town would have seen to it that such charges were brought to my door as would lead to the gallows.

It was when we were come to the rear of Master Lord's house, I still clutching the Tory cur firmly by the collar, that my heart misgave me. How would it be possible for me to send him down through that narrow tunnel without his making an outcry, and should the plan succeed, how were we to keep him in hiding where we ourselves were prisoners?

However, I had come so far on the way that there was no turning back. The plan must be carried out as it had been hastily made, whether foolish or no, and if peradventure it brought us all to grief then I ought not be so severely censured, because there was naught else to be done, as it then appeared to me.

When having, as I have said, come to the rear of Master Lord's house and I had knelt down to raise the turf, which was much like unto a lid, Seth Jepson's small remnant of courage fled, and I could feel

the scoundrel sink beneath my hand as if his life had suddenly taken flight.

Now I dared not even whisper; but, holding the knife in my teeth, and with a strength which was born of desperation, I thrust the Tory villain in head foremost as if he was no more than a log of wood, pushing on his legs until he was entirely within the tunnel and I despairing of being able to force him further because he was as limp as any rag, when suddenly it was as if the scoundrel shot forward. You may be certain I followed as quickly as possible, fearing lest he, on gaining the floor of the cellar, should set up an outcry which would alarm our double-faced host.

When I had succeeded in making my way through the tunnel an odd picture presented itself, and one which will ever remain vivid in my memory.

The lantern was burning sufficiently bright to illumine the room. I saw Hiram holding Seth Jepson by both shoulders as he stared into his face in wonder and perplexity, while Archie and Harvey, each with their hands on their knees, stooped that they might look up at what must have seemed a ghastly visitor, for probably the idea of that Tory cur coming into their hiding-place was the last thought that would have entered their minds.

At the same instant I realized how it was that Seth had so suddenly shot forward when I was striving to push him through the tunnel. Hiram, hearing the slight noise, and thinking I was stuck fast in the narrow passage, seized him by the shoulders, dragging him through and out past the screen of casks until smitten with fear and amazement.

It may well be fancied that I did not stand still many seconds to take in the scene. It was pictured upon my mind like a flash of light, and then I pressed my knife against Seth's breast, whispering in his ear:

"Remember, we will kill you like the cur you are, if you so much as whisper!"

"Are you so tired of life that for the sake of revenge you bring this fellow here?" Hiram asked softly; but with a world of anger in his tone, and I, realizing that there must be no more conversation than was absolutely necessary, told him in the fewest possible words why I had been so rash, adding feverishly:

"I could not stop to let down the turf over the tunnel, and it must be looked after."

Hiram went noiselessly behind the screen of casks, while I stood directly in front of Seth with my knife ready for use if he should attempt to speak; but such precaution was unnecessary. The scoundrel was so thoroughly frightened as to be incapable of either speech or action, and when Hiram had come back into the room he sank upon the floor of earth an inert mass.

Can you fancy our mental condition as we four stood looking mutely into each other's faces, with Seth Jepson sprawled out between us? It is difficult for me, even at this time, to understand all the fearsomeness of that moment.

Master Lord might at any moment come down to make sure those whom he believed he was deceiving yet retained confidence in him, and once he did so there would be a desperate struggle, in which we must take a human life, or perchance lose our own.

For the first time since I had known him, did I see Hiram Griffin in doubt. He stood there gazing alternately at each of us, and I could well understand that he was striving fiercely to see some way out of this tangle which seemed positive must bring us to the prison, or worse, and meanwhile Seth lay there among us showing no other sign of life than a succession of short, quick sobs.

How long we remained there in painful doubt and perplexity I will not undertake to say; but I do know that my heart was beating like a trip hammer, and I strained my ears to hear those sounds which would betoken a visit from Master Lord.

The suspense was finally ended by Hiram who, without giving any intimation of his purpose, began tearing his shirt into strips, and having thus formed what would serve in place of rope, he set about binding Seth's hands and feet so deftly that while the lad was trussed up like a chicken ready for the roasting, there was little fear of his suffering from the tightness of his bonds.

While this was being done Seth made no resistance; but gazed at us with terror in his eyes, and I believe the scoundrel was firmly convinced we had brought him there to his death.

Then Hiram, kneeling by the Tory's side, whispered softly in his ear, I bending over to catch the words:

"Our own lives depend upon keeping you silent, therefore can it be understood that we would kill you rather than suffer death ourselves. Within a short time there will come into this room a man who is devoted to the Cause, so he says; but who must not know that you are here. I question much whether we can depend upon your solemn promise;

but yet rather than put you to the torture of being gagged during four and twenty hours, I am inclined to take the chances, promising faithfully that at the first outcry from you, and whatsoever may be the danger to myself, I will take your life."

"You may believe me, and I promise to do whatsoever you say," Seth whispered, the tears of fear rolling down his cheeks.

Then Hiram lifted him in his arms as if he had been no more than a baby, and carrying him behind the screen of casks, laid the scoundrel down in the tunnel, where, I fancied, because of the time Griffin remained absent, the threat was repeated.

After returning he motioned us lads to the far corner of the cellar, and there, crouching with our heads close together, we began discussing the situation, which was now become doubly dangerous because of the prisoner.

As a beginning, and in order that Archie and Harvey might understand the better why I had brought the Tory with me, Hiram insisted upon my telling once more the story of what had happened since I crept out through the tunnel, and this I did, speaking cautiously, as you can well fancy, for if peradventure Master Lord had heard the hum of our conversation he would have made it his business to learn what we were talking about.

"I'm free to admit that you could not have done otherwise, lad, and yet it has put us in a mighty small box."

And Archie asked in a mournful tone:

"Is there no other way left open than for us to turn our backs upon Silas, setting off this very moment in the hope of being able to gain Cambridge?"

"We can wait here another four and twenty

hours, mayhap, although the chances are much against it," Hiram replied grimly.

"But if Job Lord should learn that he is here —" Harvey began, and Griffin interrupted him by saying sharply:

"If he does, it is a case of our taking another prisoner, unless it so happens that the man fights desperately, forcing us to end the struggle by the shedding of blood."

"If he finds Seth in the passage —"

"Aye, if he simply finds the tunnel are we done for, unless it be possible to overcome him. We can count that that young Tory cur is so frightened he will not venture to make any outcry during the next five or six hours; but after that I am not so certain. Once his limbs become cramped, and he is suffering pain, there's no knowing what the coward might be brought to do. This much is true, however: when Job Lord visits us each one must be on the alert, ready to spring upon him in case his suspicions are aroused. At the first word or movement of his, betokening the belief that we are keeping something from him, an attack must be made. Don't wait each for the other; but let the first who sees aught of danger jump upon the double-faced villain, and the rest will bear a hand."

And this was the only plan we were able to form, although I dare venture to say the four of us remained crouching in the corner discussing the situation from every point of view, a full hour.

It had simply come to this, that we were to make another prisoner, perhaps, thus adding to the danger that already surrounded us, and after that had been done the chances for saving our own necks were no better.

It seemed to me as if I lived a whole life-time during the remainder of that night, hoping Job Lord would come to put an end to the suspense, and at the same time fearing he might do so.

Then, when the trap-door was finally opened I leaped up in surprise, as if there had never been a thought in my mind that he would come, and, being on my feet, must perforce do something to explain the sudden movement, as well as hide the fear which I realized was written on my face.

After we had finished whispering in the corner Hiram proposed that we lay down on the bed, taking the dummy apart now it was of no further use, and there we were stretched out at full length when the raising of the trap-door brought me to a standing posture.

Luckily I had wit enough to continue on toward the fire-place as if bent on doing something in the way of cooking, and had begun to rattle the pans before Master Lord descended the ladder. Not until then did it come to my mind that in the event of any trouble arising from this visit, I was in a good position to deal out to Seth Jepson that which he deserved.

"Getting hungry, eh?" Master Lord asked in an oily tone as he seated himself on one of the stools by the table, and Hiram stretched himself lazily as he replied:

"It must be late in the morning, and we are inclined for a bit to eat, although we haven't earned it."

"That's right, make yourselves as comfortable as possible, and don't worry about earning your food, because it is as free as the wind that blows. You'll

earn all you get here, and much more, when the time for real work comes."

"Is that like to be soon?" Archie asked.

"As matters are moving, I believe you will find enough to keep you busy after getting back to Cambridge."

"I would we might start this very day!" Hiram exclaimed in so earnest a tone that I knew full well the words had come from his heart, without any thought of speaking for the sake of keeping up the pretense of friendship with Job Lord.

"So do I, lad, for your sake, because it must be dull work here; but remember that such a task as you have set yourselves is not to be performed in a minute, and you can well afford to wait many a long day if finally you are successful."

"What o'clock is it?" Hiram asked.

"Seven in the morning, and a dull day with a misty rain falling."

"Just the kind of weather for a visit to the Bridewell, if so be matters were right there," Hiram said quickly.

"Even though it were the worst tempest that ever raged, you could do nothing there while so many Britishers are on guard," Master Lord cried in a decisive tone, as if to put an end to any such conversation; but Hiram was not disposed to let the matter drop.

"It was in your mind that some of the lobster backs might be drawn off while General Gage is pushing his outposts on the Neck. How can you say that such may not have been done this very morning?"

"I shan't need many hours in which to settle

that question, for it is in my mind to go there now, hoping I may be so fortunate as to get speech with your comrade."

At this moment I was cutting up the leg of lamb, putting the slices into a frying-pan as if intending to warm them, and Master Lord eyed me curiously, most like thinking I was an awkward lad at such work. His steady gaze annoyed me because I feared each instant he might discover that the position of the casks had been changed, and in my nervousness I went toward the table in order to place there the frying-pan, intending to give over my attempt at playing the cook.

While doing so, naturally my gaze was fixed upon the face of this man whom we knew to be an enemy while he professed to be a friend, and I saw an expression of surprise suddenly come over it as his eyes were fixed upon the screen to the tunnel.

"Been playing housewife by setting things to rights?" he asked in an odd tone, as he rose to his feet and started with an assumption of carelessness toward the casks.

My heart leaped into my mouth fit to choke me. The moment had come when everything which we had done would be discovered, for he could not fail to see Seth if he stepped behind the screen, or of knowing what we had done when he looked at the contents of the casks.

It was my place, because of what we had agreed, to have leaped upon him on the instant, trusting that the others would follow my example, and yet so stupefied was I, whether through fear, or astonishment because the secret could not have been kept longer, that there was no movement on my part until Hiram Griffin, who had been sitting on the

edge of the bed, bounded forward like a cat, alighting on the shoulders of our treacherous host and bearing him, as a matter of course, to the floor.

Job Lord was possessed of greater strength than one might have fancied from his build, and although all three of us lads sprang on the instant to Hiram's aid, for I recovered from my stupefaction as quickly as I had fallen into it, he succeeded in turning Griffin completely over, gaining a hold upon his throat in such manner as threatened to put a speedy end to the struggling.

Hiram was not one who would lose his head at such a time, and straightway the two floundered about, first one on top and then the other, to such an extent that we who were anxiously striving for an opportunity to take part in the fight failed of so doing. Meanwhile Hiram's eyes were protruding as had Seth's, until I believed he would be strangled to death before we could get a hold of the traitor.

Finally, and after what seemed to me a full ten minutes, I contrived to seize Job Lord by the arm, and as I pulled at the limb Archie was able to get a hold on his throat, thus, as can well be imagined, bringing the fight to an end.

We lads had not done our part any too soon, for by the time Master Lord was forced to let go his grip, Hiram appeared to be nigh unto death, and indeed such a sorry spectacle did he present that I would have let go my hold of Job Lord in order to give him to drink, but that he cried hoarsely, divining what was in my mind:

"Keep him fast, lad, keep him fast! I'll get my breath in a second," and then he struggled to his feet.

During all this time we had been fighting in si-

lence, no one venturing to raise his voice; but now when he saw himself helpless and at our mercy Job Lord let out such a yell as might have been heard a full quarter-mile away, while from behind the casks Seth set up a whimpering cry, which was caused by fear rather than any desire to raise an alarm.

Even though we were in the cellar with a heavy flooring of planks above us, there could be no question but that Job Lord would succeed in alarming some of the neighbors unless his wind was shut off, and I saw Archie dig his fingers into the fellow's throat with a grip that must have caused intense pain, but yet I am bound to give the traitor credit for struggling to raise his voice again.

By this time Hiram had so far recovered as to take up the coat which had been used for the head of the dummy, and thrown on the floor when it was no longer of service, saying as he came forward:

"Let him open his mouth once more and I'll shove a clapper in that will put an end to any such noise."

Until now Job Lord's face, what with the choking and with anger, had been darkened, so to speak; there had been on it an expression of intense hatred, and a desire to do bodily harm, but when Hiram came up with that which would serve as a gag, he grew pale, while his lips quivered as if suddenly and for the first time realizing how completely he was in our power.

"I'm no such fool as not to know when I am whipped," and I am willing to give him credit for speaking firmly, even though he must have believed his very life was trembling in the balance. "There is no need to gag me, because I promise to hold my peace."

"Meaning that you will do so until some one knocks at the outer door, and then we shall hear from you again," Hiram cried hoarsely.

"I'm not ready to say I wouldn't take advantage of any chance to call for help; but just now I'd give a lot to know how it was you imposed upon our friends to such an extent that they were willing to send you hither?"

I looked at the man in amazement, wondering what he meant, when Hiram cried in a voice thick with anger:

"Do you mean to keep up the pretense that you are serving the Cause rather than the king?"

"There are people in plenty, both at Cambridge and in this town, who have had so much information and assistance from me that they can swear with all truth that there is none more devoted to the Cause than I."

CHAPTER XVI

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

EVEN though I believed we had good proof that Master Lord was playing a double game, his assertion of loyalty to the Cause, made so earnestly and with such seeming good faith, staggered me.

Was it possible, I asked myself, that we were mistaken? Had we allowed ourselves to be blinded by suspicion, and was Job Lord all he professed?

We knew from what the lieutenant at the battery had told us, that this man whom we claimed to be in league with the Britishers, had been of great service to the Cause, having sent much valuable information to our people and aided many a man who otherwise might have fallen into the clutches of the enemy. Could it be that all these things had been done as a blind, and we four the first who discovered his double dealings?

I looked around at my comrades and saw mingled doubt and fear written upon the faces of Archie and Harvey, showing that they also were beginning to question whether we had not made a grievous mistake. With Hiram, however, the matter was different. He had settled in his mind that Job Lord would work us harm as soon as it suited his purpose, and there was nothing the man might say which would convince him to the contrary.

"You talk well, Master Lord," he said, holding the coat ready to be thrust into the mouth of the

villain if so be he attempted to make any outcry, "and I know full well that you could give proof of having served the Cause to a certain extent; but if you haven't worked greater advantage to the king, I'll agree to crawl on all fours so long a time as I may live."

"If I had counted on playing false, why were you allowed to remain here all this time, and why did I make you as comfortable as was in my power?" Master Lord asked, now beginning to understand that soft words would be of but little avail with one like Hiram.

"Those are questions which I cannot answer just now; but after we have put you in such plight that it will be no longer possible to make an outcry, I'm counting on doing what I may at finding out. It will go hard if there isn't something in the room above that will disprove your words."

For the first time since we had fallen upon him did I see the man wince, and on the instant all my fears that we might have made a grievous mistake were dispelled, for I knew as well as if he had told me in so many words, that evidence would be found against him if the house was searched.

"You've hit it right, Hiram!" I cried; "but don't spend too much time talking here, lest those who have visited him before should come again and discover that the trap-door is open."

"Run up the ladder, lad, and see to it that doors and windows are barred securely," he said quickly, and I obeyed feverishly, fearing lest before I could do as he desired those men who had quarreled with Master Lord might return.

In addition to the locks on the side and rear doors, were stout bars, and after having assured myself

that the bolts were shot, I put the timbers securely in place; then examined carefully the fastenings of every shutter until having satisfied myself beyond peradventure that none could enter from the outside save by battering down the barriers.

When I was come into the cellar again, Job Lord had been bound hand and foot after much the same fashion as was Seth Jepson, and the lads must have lifted him upon one of the beds, for he was lying there with a gag, formed from Hiram's coat, in his mouth, glaring at us fiercely.

"We may as well bring the Tory lad out here to bear him company," Archie suggested, and in a twinkling Hiram came from behind the casks with Seth in his arms.

Even though up to this time we had had suspicions in our minds that a wrong was being done Job Lord, they would have vanished when those two saw each other.

Seth Jepson gave vent to a cry of surprise, and on Master Lord's face could be read that which told, so I fancied, of an acquaintance between them.

"Shall we gag Seth?" Harvey asked, and Hiram replied as if it was a matter of little moment:

"There's no need of taking so much trouble. You and Archie are to stay here while Luke and I have a look over the house, and if so be Seth unwisely attempts to make a disturbance, put your knife into him, for we should be doing the Cause no little service by sending both these fellows out of the world."

Then, motioning to me, Hiram led the way up the ladder, and after some searching in that room which served Job Lord as a kitchen we found a store of tallow dips, one of which we lighted, because, since

the shutters had been closed, it was almost dark within the dwelling.

Master Lord's home was not sumptuously furnished; but he was well outfitted with chests of drawers and cupboards such as housewives fancy, and among these we began our search, taking first that piece of furniture which was at the same time a desk for writing and a receptacle for books and papers.

We had not long to search, if to prove that Job Lord had been acting as a tool for the Britishers was our only aim. On the top of the desk, as if it had been but lately placed there, was a folded paper, and when Hiram opened it eagerly I read these words across the top:

"Information for Job Lord to send to the rebels."

Then followed what I knew to be a false account of the doings of the Britishers; but neither Hiram nor I cared to read it entirely.

"I reckon here's enough to hang Master Lord, if so be we had him in Cambridge," my companion said grimly, and then, his appetite for evidence being whetted by that which had come so conveniently to hand, he continued the search, finding four or five documents proving that our host was in friendly communication with the Britishers.

Then we came upon that which caused Hiram to cry aloud in triumph and satisfaction, for it was neither more nor less than a pass from General Gage himself, permitting the bearer *and friends* to leave the city by any route whatsoever.

"I'm allowing we won't have to swim from here to Cambridge!" Hiram said exultantly, as he carefully folded and placed the precious document inside his stocking.

I believed this would be the end of our search, because we had found all for which we came, and more. To people in our situation a safeguard from the king's governor was something of more value than can well be understood by those who did not live in the days when British might made right.

"Now we can go when we please, and the sooner we set off the better, for surely it would be folly to make any attempt at aiding Silas while he is so closely guarded," I cried, and Hiram replied grimly:

"Even though we decide to leave without making any effort toward accomplishing that for which we came, I'm allowing there's no need for overly much haste, more especially since we can pass ourselves off as Job Lord and friends easier after night has fully come."

Then Hiram began searching once more among the papers, this time doing it in a methodical manner, and I, who feared each instant lest there should come a summons at the door, or we hear tokens of trouble from the room below, had half-turned to go toward the trap-door when Hiram caused me to wheel about suddenly as he leaped to his feet, waving above his head a slip of paper as if having taken leave of his senses.

"I'm allowing there's still a chance left for us to lend Silas Brownrigg a hand!" he cried, speaking so loudly that I leaped upon him, covering his mouth with my hand lest peradventure some one from the outside might hear and be so inquisitive as to make an attempt at entering.

"Read this, lad! Read this!" Hiram cried as soon as he could free his mouth from my hand, and at the same time he laid upon the desk, where the

flickering light of the tallow dip might fall upon it, the paper which had caused him so much of excitement.

During a full minute I stood gazing at the document, not daring to believe the evidence of my own eyes, and saying to myself over and over again that it must be impossible such an order could have come into our hands.

This is what I read, and you may see whether a lad in my situation would not have doubted even the written words:

"The bearer, Job Lord, is hereby authorized to take from the Bridewell any one of the prisoners captured at Charlestown, which he may select. The officer on duty will follow the bearer's instructions in every particular, and retain this order as receipt for the prisoner."

It was signed by the governor's aide-de-camp as secretary, and bore the king's seal. In other words, it was a direct command from General Gage to the officer at the Bridewell to deliver over any one of the prisoners taken at Breed's hill which Job Lord might point out, and, what is more, was dated the very day before we made a prisoner of this double-dyed villain!

"If we had a key to all the plots in that scoundrel's head, then would you find that this permit to take away a prisoner is part and parcel of some scheme concerning us," Hiram said emphatically, and I was quite of the same mind, being convinced thereto because the document had been so lately written.

In some way, and I hoped it might be made clear before many days had passed, the delivery of a prisoner to Job Lord was, together with the holding

of us, a trap for more important ends; but what those ends might be my mind failed totally in the grasping.

Hiram, like me, no longer had any interest in Master Lord's belongings. We had found sufficient to brand him the vilest of traitors, and, what was more to our purpose, had obtained at the very moment when we despaired of being able to aid our comrade in any way, that which would effect his release, unless it so chanced that the worthy Master Lord was particularly well known at the Bridewell. This last thought came into my mind, darkening all hope, at the moment Hiram turned to go into the cellar that he might acquaint the other lads with our good fortune, and, clutching him nervously by the arm, I reminded him of the disagreeable fact that whosoever presented himself with that order from Governor Gage, might speedily find himself a prisoner with the tables turned completely in favor of Job Lord.

"Aye, lad, I have already reckoned on that, yet at the same time when night has come it is my purpose to go to the Bridewell as boldly as that double-faced villain would have done, trusting I can get my nose out of the scrape if so be the officer on duty chances to know the scoundrel we have got tied up below."

"It is a desperate chance," I said with an inward tremor that was much like faint-heartedness, and he replied laughingly:

"Tell me, Luke Wright, how much more desperate is it to go out armed with a safeguard from the king's governor, and due authority to take charge of a prisoner, than was your act in captur-

ing Seth Jepson at the very time when we ourselves were captives?"

"I did that because there was nothing else to be done," I cried.

"And so shall I go to the Bridewell, because there is nothing else to be done if we would aid Silas Brownrigg."

It was not my intention to say aught which might discourage him from taking advantage of the document so strangely come into our possession. As a matter of course I burned to have him do it; but I could not for the life of me refrain from considering all the chances against us.

Snuffing out the tallow dip, we two went into the cellar, Hiram holding 'twixt his thumb and finger the precious order from Governor Gage, and when we were come to where Job Lord lay, Griffin took up the lantern that the scoundrel might see what we had found.

There was no change of expression on his face. The villain knew full well that we would come upon evidence against him after ever so careless a search of his belongings, and therefore counted on our having this paper through which he hoped to work some wild scheme.

"What is it? What are you showing him?" Archie asked eagerly, and Hiram, disappointed because the prisoner had failed to show any signs of surprise or distress, held it up for the lad to read.

"But that cannot be!" Archie cried in amazement. "Governor Gage would never issue any such order!"

"But he has done so, else another must have

stolen the king's seal," and Hiram pointed triumphantly to the impression in wax which was fastened to a short length of blue ribbon.

"But how could it be that Job Lord would be allowed to choose a prisoner from among those taken at Breed's hill?" Archie continued in bewilderment, and I cried, eyeing the prisoner sharply all the while:

"He got it for some purpose which General Gage understood and approved, and that purpose was all of a piece with our being held here! Some day we shall learn the secret, and then I hope most earnestly that this same Master Lord, who has claimed to be devoted body and soul to the Cause, may be given over to my mercy even as he is at this moment."

They were high sounding words, perhaps, for a lad like me to use, and yet Master Lord shrank under them as if in fear, which was the first exhibition of feeling he had given since we came from the room above.

It can well be understood that after Archie and Harvey had recovered from the amazement caused by reading the order from Governor Gage, our tongues were loosened, and during a certain time we gave ourselves over to rejoicing, as if already the task we had set ourselves was accomplished. But even while we indulged in words of triumph, there was in my heart a certain undefined fear because all this had come about in such a mysterious way, having really been gained by that blunder of mine in making a prisoner of Seth Jepson, when it had seemed as if such an act on my part would lead to direst results.

Hiram still held to it that when nightfall was come he would present himself at the Bridewell, and

with that as a starting point we set about laying plans for the future.

They were simple enough, if so be everything worked as we would have it, because once with Silas in our company we could, thanks to the pass in Hiram's stocking, march out over Boston Neck as bold as lions. The stumbling block was, a possibility that the officer at the Bridewell might be sufficiently well acquainted with Master Lord to take into custody whoever presented the governor's order, and the greater part of our discussion had to do with that chance.

Hiram claimed that we should allow no more than an hour to elapse from the time he set off for the Bridewell, before taking to our heels if so be he failed to return, because, as he said, within that time he would either be returned to Cow lane with Silas by his side, or lie in one of the cells of the jail.

"You shall take this pass, Luke Wright," he said, pulling the paper from his stocking, "and see to it that if I'm held in custody you make all speed out of the town, leaving me to my fate."

"Indeed I will do nothing of the kind," was my reply, and I refused to take the paper from his hand. "If you are held at the Bridewell, all the more reason why we three should strain every nerve to do whatsoever may be in our power to aid you."

"The only thing within your power, lad, will be to save your own skins, for once this trick of ours is discovered, you may rest assured the Britishers will pay a visit to Job Lord's house in order to learn what has become of him, and if peradventure you delay after there is reason to believe I am a prisoner, you will have effected nothing save a loss to the Cause of three stout-hearted lads."

Well, we chewed over this question as to whether it would not be cowardly to desert Hiram if he was taken, until a full two hours had passed, when Archie very wisely said:

"If no move is to be made until nightfall, will some one tell me what prevents our breaking fast? My stomach cries out for food, and if peradventure all goes this night as we would have it, then is it necessary we put our bodies in fair condition, for there are many miles to be traveled before we again see the encampment at Cambridge."

Hiram immediately acted upon this suggestion, insisting that he was better fitted to play the part of cook than any other, and as he set about the task I saw Job Lord writhing in pain, which caused me to realize how much of bodily suffering must be his, therefore said to my comrades:

"Don't let it be thought that there is any softness in my heart for such as him; but it does not become us to cause another unnecessary suffering, therefore it is I propose we take the gag out of Master Lord's mouth for a time, since he must be in great pain."

"I never saw any good come of favoring a snake," Hiram grumbled; but yet he did not make any protest against my proposition, and I pulled the gag from the mouth of the man who had worked us so much injury, saying at the same time as I seated myself near the bed, holding the knife which had been taken from its sheath:

"You can well understand that we would not stick at doing you harm, and it may be our fingers itch to pay you for your treachery, therefore should any one approach this building and you attempt to make an outcry, I shall consider that I have done the Cause a service by taking your life."

It was nearly a minute before the man could speak, so cramped were his jaws, and then, with a look which had in it, if such a thing can be possible, a mingling of gratitude and hatred, he said softly:

"I'm not such an idiot as to kick when I'm fairly downed; but you need fear no visitors before sunset."

"We'll keep our ears open for them just the same, seeing's how it don't stand to reason we can put overly much faith in your words," Hiram cried, and added to me, "Have your knife ready, lad, and don't hesitate to use it at the first show of a disturbance. He may speak you fairly now; but once there was a decent chance of taking your life without losing his, you'd be in the next world in a twinkling."

"All of which is true," Master Lord replied quietly, and I could not but give him credit for such show of courage under the circumstances. "If I held you at the same disadvantage, would you hesitate to strike on the first opportunity?"

"Faith, no," Hiram replied laughingly. "And now you are talking like a decent man, although far from being one. Once we get you in Cambridge, where there's no fear your friends may come, I shall breathe freely; but until then I'm watching every move you make."

"Surely you are not so foolish as to think you can take me to Cambridge?" the man cried quickly, and Hiram asked as he continued his task of cooking:

"Why not? We've got your pass, and I'm allowing that you and Seth Jepson can be counted as among our friends during such time as we are under the eyes of the lobster backs."

"That pass does not allow of your taking two prisoners out," Master Lord said with a snarl which was much like that of an angry cat's.

"Why not? If you were leading a party of friends, and had just made selection of one of the prisoners taken at Breed's hill, how would you account for him?"

Master Lord refused to answer, and I asked myself if Hiram could be so venturesome as to think it possible we might carry these two Tories out of the town. If so, then our wondrous fortune must have turned his head, for verily none but a madman would, after having gotten out of such a tangle as we had been in, take yet more desperate chances.

Now for the first time did Seth Jepson come out from the fever of terror which had assailed him since I thrust him into the tunnel, and began to plead most earnestly, like the coward that he was, for us to show him what he called mercy. Having heard our conversation with Master Lord, and understanding that we were in fair position to work our will, he realized, perhaps better than ever before, how wholly he was in our power.

Had the lad shown the slightest token of courage I might have had some sympathy for him, for surely it was hard to thus suddenly find himself at the mercy of those whom he had wronged, at the very moment he must have believed everything was going his way; but the fellow was such a veritable coward that even the softest-hearted could not feel aught save contempt for him.

He whined and whimpered, declaring it had never been in his mind to do us wrong, and swearing to

that which we knew was absolutely false, until Hiram cried angrily:

"Put a stopper on that fellow's jaw! It makes me sick to hear his howling. I have some respect for a lad or man who can take as well as give; but when it comes to working all the harm he may, and then showing the white feather so completely, my patience is soon gone."

Seth shut his mouth like a clam. I believe the coward would have tried to stand on his head, had Hiram given any such command, so eager was he to show his willingness to obey, and I said to myself that of the two, Job Lord, who had meditated worse treachery against the Cause than Seth could ever have hoped to work, was the better.

In due time Hiram had as appetizing a meal as could be prepared from all the stores to be found in the building, for once he had set about the work of a cook he did not scruple at overhauling the provisions in the room above, finding there many a toothsome dainty which had been supplied this miserable double-faced spy by his British friends.

We ate heartily, and with greater relish than at any time since this venture in aid of Silas had been proposed, for now was the greater portion of the burden removed from our hearts, and we could see our way out, where before all had been darkness with a British prison at the end.

When the meal was ready I would have put the gag back into Job Lord's mouth; but before it was possible to do so he said with the air of one who speaks the truth:

"I'm not minded to take so much of punishment as that involves, if it can in any way be avoided,

therefore it is I give you my solemn word not to raise my voice above a whisper from now till sunset."

I looked at Hiram to see what he thought of the proposition, for there was in my mind a suspicion that Master Lord might have some scheme in his head to do us harm; but our comrade said decidedly:

"As a rule I wouldn't take the word of such as he for the value of a button; but since he knows full well that we could fall upon him before he had time to let out more than one yell, and also understands that that one yell would be his last, I'm thinking it is safe enough to let him have the use of his jaws."

Therefore it was that while we feasted Master Lord asked in what you might call a manly fashion, if, when the meal was come to an end, we would give him so much of food as might serve to satisfy his hunger, claiming that he had not broken fast that day.

"Neither have I," whined Seth, "and I'm nearly dead with having been mauled about so much."

"It wouldn't do a little bit of harm if you were wholly dead; but we're not counting on starving either of you, so depend upon it that your stomachs shall be filled, for when we once set out, having Silas Brownrigg in our company, you will be called on to step mighty lively."

I looked at Hiram questioningly, asking, so far as was possible with my eyes, whether he was wild enough to think of hampering us with these prisoners, and he nodded in a way to show that he was not minded to have any argument regarding it.

"Aye, lad, if I read your face aright, that's ex-

actly what I do count on doing. There is no better place for hatching a scheme than over a cook-stove when you have plenty with which to work, as I had this afternoon, and I've got an idea that it won't be such a terrible hard matter to land these fellows in Cambridge. If so be everything goes to my liking, you will soon understand that it is as easy to take the prisoners, as to go alone."

I knew that Hiram did not care to discuss whatsoever plan he might have in mind while the prisoners might hear him, and therefore held my peace; but when we were done with feasting because it was impossible to eat any more, I beckoned him to follow me into the room above, where I asked what mad scheme he had hit upon.

"It may come to naught, lad, therefore we won't discuss it; but I'm going out around the town a bit, and you can bar the door after me. I'll knock twice on the window shutter when I come back."

"Going out in the daytime?" I cried sharply. "Show yourself in this town where you are like to be taken into custody? Don't, Hiram, don't take foolish risks now when, by being careful, we have plain sailing before us!"

"I'm not taking chances," he replied doggedly. "You must remember that my face is not known here as yours is, and with what I have in my pocket who will dare put aught of hindrance in my way?"

"The first officer you come across may know Job Lord well, and, finding you in possession of a document which belongs to him, will come here without delay."

"Since when have officers taken a hand in such matters, save after a man was already in the custody of the watch or the patrol?" Hiram asked

scornfully. "You know, lad, that all I have to fear is the possibility of coming in contact with a squad of lobster backs in charge of a corporal or a sergeant, and if I can't shut their eyes it is high time I was taken to the Bridewell."

It was useless for me to argue against his purpose, whatever that might be, for the fellow was determined, and even though I had gone down on my knees to him he would have done that which he said.

He was not sparing of strength when he thrust me back from him as he began to unbar the door and I would have hindered him; but said as I staggered against the wall almost overthrown:

"Have no fear for me, lad. I know what I'm about, and take my word for it that I'm not running into the least little bit of danger. Listen for two raps on the shutter when I come back, which will be within an hour."

He was gone even as he spoke, and all I could do toward repairing what I believed to be serious mischief, was to lock and bar the door after him, saying to myself that if he failed to come back as he had promised, and aught suspicious was heard, I would insist that Archie and Harvey join me in flight, for then would Master Lord's house be the one place in Boston town where lurked the greatest danger for us.

"Where is Hiram?" Archie asked when I descended the ladder alone.

"Gone out of doors," was my sulky reply.

"Out of doors!" both lads cried as with one voice. "In the daytime?"

"Aye, that he has, and verily it seems as if good fortune has turned his head."

"If he depends upon that pass in my name as a safeguard while he wanders the streets, I'll answer for it the tables will be turned before you have time to choose among the prisoners at the Bridewell," Job Lord said vindictively, and his words were not needed to make my heart heavy, for already had I come to believe that after all the good work he had done, our imprisonment, perhaps our death, could be laid directly at his door.

CHAPTER XVII

HIRAM'S VENTURE

THE other lads were equally disturbed in mind regarding what seemed to be a foolish venturing forth on the part of Hiram. After matters had come about so mysteriously in our favor when we had given up all hope of being able to succeed in the undertaking, it seemed much like flying in the face of Providence to take any risks that were not absolutely necessary.

We would be bound to incur so much of danger in order to make an attempt at releasing Silas, that to put all this on the hazard, simply to satisfy what I believed only a whim, was to my mind little less than criminal folly.

You can fancy we were not heartened after Job Lord had spoken so decidedly regarding the certainty that Hiram would speedily come to grief, because the pass he believed to be of so much value could avail nothing when he was come upon by the patrol.

I fancied it was possible to see on that double-faced villain's countenance joy because of what was being done, and there could be no question but that he firmly believed Hiram had, as people say, overturned his dish of porridge.

It may be simply because I was in such a wretched frame of mind that I imagined it; but for the time it was to me a fact that Seth had regained a

goodly portion of his courage on seeing Master Lord so well pleased, and even found his tongue once more, saying vindictively, even as had the man who hoped to have betrayed us, that we were about come to the end of our rope, when he would have his turn.

That Archie was nearly as disturbed in mind as I, and had quite as many fears regarding the future, I knew when he said angrily, leaning over the bed as if to strike the Tory lad:

"It is not well for you to crow yet a while, Seth Jepson. Up to this moment you have been so cowardly as hardly to know what was going on, and therefore it is we will have no words from you."

"It can do you no more harm to hear me speak, than when Master Lord talks," he muttered, and Archie replied with no slight show of temper:

"Job Lord has not shown himself to be the white-livered cur you have. One may take from him who gives proof of some little courage, more than would be listened to from a veritable coward."

Seth glanced toward Master Lord as if thinking he would bear him out in his insolence; but however traitorous the elder prisoner was, he had neither love nor sympathy for such as Seth Jepson had shown himself to be, therefore remained silent, and the Tory lad did not venture to speak again.

We could not talk of our plans for the future without being overheard by Job Lord, and this would have been, so I argued, in the highest degree dangerous, for there was yet the possibility he might succeed in making his escape before we could leave the town, in which case he would have us at a disadvantage.

Neither were we minded to speak of trifling mat-

ters. The situation was all too full of peril, and there were so many chances we would come to grief, that it was well nigh impossible for us to do other than sit there in gloomy silence, watching the prisoners even while we feared each instant to hear an outcry at the door, which would tell that the lobster backs had come to learn we from Cambridge were hiding there.

As the moments passed, so slowly that it seemed as if each was near an hour in length, I came to believe beyond a question that Hiram would be, if he had not already been, taken into custody, and strove to form some plan of action, saying to myself that we would wait no longer than until the setting of the sun before taking to our heels, leaving the prisoners to be set free by whomsoever should visit the house.

Now and again at short intervals I ascended the ladder, peering through the crevices of the shutters to learn how near to setting the sun might be, and thus succeeded in so working myself into a fever of anxiety and fear as to be like one who has lost his senses.

It so chanced that I was in the upper room trying to gain some idea of the time, when there came two sharp raps on the shutter through which I was peering, and so nervous had I become that I cried aloud in fear, darting back to the trap-door, positive that none other than a lobster back or a Tory could be thus striving to attract our attention.

While one might have counted ten I entirely forgot what had been agreed upon between Hiram Griffin and me, and my feet were already upon the rungs of the ladder to descend, when the cob-webs seemed suddenly to have been blown from my

brain, allowing me to realize that despite all the dangers Hiram had succeeded in gratifying his whim without loss of liberty.

You may well fancy that I opened the door in a twinkling, for it was dangerous to have him standing there in the broad light of day, and when he was come into the room, having closed and barred the door behind him, I flung my arms around his neck, clinging to him as if he was one lately returned from the very verge of the grave, as indeed I believe to this day was the case.

"Why, lad, what has come over you?" he asked in astonishment. "You are shaking like an old woman with the palsy, and your face is as white as I have heard it said ghosts' faces are."

"I had brought myself to believe you were taken into custody, Hiram! Job Lord was so certain the pass would not avail you, that it was almost the same as if I had seen you in the clutches of the lobster backs. You were cruel to leave us at such a time, simply to show that you could roam about the city at will, when the slightest mistake would have caused our chances for escaping with Silas to fall to the ground."

"Is it in your mind, lad, that I went out simply on a whim? That I am so light-headed as to take chances in this Tory town for the purpose of showing that it could be done?" he asked in a tone that was really one of reproof.

"Why else then did you go?" I cried, now grown angry, having recovered from my timorousness.

"There came into my mind the idea that it would be a brave act to carry Job Lord and Seth Jepson back to Cambridge, and so I said to you lads; but no one believed it might be done. Then

I had what has turned out to be a lucky thought, and said to myself if perchance it would be possible to get possession of a skiff we could, without much trouble or danger, take those two curs with us as proof that, aside from releasing Silas, our coming here had not been without good results."

"But even though you found a boat, Hiram, how might we take passage in her, hampered by Job Lord and Seth Jepson?" I cried petulantly, for it excited my anger yet more to have him thus speak of what seemed an impossibility, from whatever point you viewed it.

"That was the question in my own mind, lad, when the matter first came to me; but before coming back I settled it."

"Settled it?" I repeated dumbly.

"Aye, and what's more, every arrangement is made. Who, think you, I have been hob-nobbing with this last half hour?"

"It would be of much the same piece with what you've already done, had you been so venturesome as to go even to the guard-house near Hill's wharf," I said angrily, and his laugh was as hearty and full of joy as if we were already come among our friends, having accomplished all that had been in our minds.

"You are a great guesser, Luke Wright. It *is* to the guard-house I have been, and if by this time those lobster backs do not believe that I am as simple minded and jolly a Tory as ever set foot in Boston town, then have I made the mistake of my life."

"You at the guard-house?" I cried, not able even now to understand that which I myself had guessed at.

"Aye, and it was to have a quiet chat with the officer on duty there, who chances to be a blooming Britisher, thick-headed as are all of his kidney, having the rank of sergeant, and believing himself to be the best soldier that ever came to this benighted colony."

"But why should you go there?" I cried, now grown yet more angry. "Why take chances which were unnecessary?"

"I am of the mind that it was the best stroke of work I have ever yet done, for not only is the skiff nearby where we can walk out at our leisure and step on board her; but that red-faced, beef-eating Britisher stands ready to help us put our prisoners over the rail."

"What?" I exclaimed in bewilderment.

"Aye, and even more, if you please, lad. The sergeant will send with me to the Bridewell one of his men, so that I shall have no difficulty in bringing back that raging rebel whom I count to select on the strength of General Gage's permit, or order, whichever you choose to call it."

I could no longer speak, so perplexing was that which Hiram had said, and there came into my mind the belief that he was striving to make a fool of me by telling a cock-and-bull story whereby, after I had shown faith in it, he might laugh me to scorn.

"It was like this, lad," he said in a grave tone, clapping both hands on my shoulders as if it was needed he should hold me where my attention could not be distracted. "I was minded to try on some such lobster back as would be found in yonder guard-house, the effect of General Gage's order allowing Job Lord to select a prisoner. I said to myself that by striving to make friends with one

of the rank and file, I might get some idea as to how such a yarn as must be put up at the Bridewell would be taken, and with the pass also in my possession, I allowed that no officer of less rank than a captain would dare interfere with my movements. Therefore it was I went to the guard-house."

"What excuse did you make for going there?" I contrived to ask.

"It was simply a matter of business, lad. I told this sergeant how finely Job Lord and myself had been tricking the rebels by giving up certain information now and then, and aiding such of them as were of little importance in General Gage's eyes, in order to establish a reputation as being true friends to the Cause. It was to him mighty funny, and it seems that he already has had some traffic with our friend, Master Lord, having more than once received from his superior officer orders to aid our double-faced villain whenever it might be necessary. Therefore he was not surprised, save because of never having come across me. I explained this last by saying what you know to be true, which was that I had been in the American camp looking about to see what I could pick up."

By this time I had come to understand that Hiram was speaking no more than the truth, and could thoroughly enjoy the story which he was telling with so much of pleasure.

"I showed the sergeant General Gage's order for one of the Bridewell prisoners to be delivered, and then told him that we were counting to set a trap for some rebels who were of importance. That this prisoner taken at Breed's Hill was to be the cheese with which we should bait it, all of which

amused him hugely. Then, in order to explain why Master Lord was not the head and front of this trick, I told him Job was not quite himself to-day; was suffering a little; could not move about without considerable difficulty, which was also true, and he swallowed it as a baby swallows fresh milk."

"Yes, but how did you get the skiff?" I cried, now impatient to hear the result of all this scheming.

"That came in right naturally when I told him about the trap, and that it must be set on the Roxbury shore. I simply asked him what boat Job Lord used when he made an excursion among the rebels on General Gage's business, and he at once pointed out a craft that lay alongside the wharf, saying it was the property of Master Lord. Well, that seemed to work in very reasonably, and I told him I reckoned I would bring it down along shore because it was necessary that what we did be kept secret even from those who served the king. He quite agreed with me, so the boat is within five minutes' walk of this house, and our friend, the sergeant, stands ready to help us leave town, because of the pass we have, at any time that may best suit our pleasure. Now do you think I went out to satisfy a whim, Luke Wright?"

"Hiram, you have a longer head than any man I ever met, and save for you our company of Minute Boys would have played a mighty small part since their enrollment. But I wonder that you dared attempt to hood-wink the Britisher."

"I had to do it, lad, for it struck me that we were in about as delicate a position as any four could possibly get into, and I doubted whether, unless we

could cook up some scheme like the one which has worked so successfully, it would be possible for us to get away with whole skins."

"But while talking with us lads you allowed it would be an easy matter to carry the plan through as we had formed it," I said irritably, and he replied laughingly:

"Aye, true for you, lad; but of what avail would it have been had I set forth all the dangers of the enterprise as they presented themselves to my mind? Would it have given you courage had I allowed that there was a great doubt in my mind whether we might not be taken into the custody immediately on showing ourselves at the Bridewell?"

"Well," I interrupted, "have you done away with all danger? Is there any less chance now that you will be detected, simply because of having convinced some thick-headed sergeant?"

"Aye, lad, it strikes me the danger is very much less, because I count on going there with a lobster back as guard and assistant. The officer on duty at the Bridewell will never stop to ask who sent the soldier with me; but seeing the governor's order, will, unless he is a rank idiot, conclude that General Gage himself showed me such delicate attention, and I'm counting that by having a red-coated escort I've wiped out more than half the chances that the order will be questioned."

The very fact of his having made such a venture frightened me, even though it was all happily come to an end, and to our advantage, as it seemed. Once more I trembled with fear, and then, realizing that Archie and Harvey must be burning with impatience to know why we delayed coming into the cellar, I said to Hiram that he should remain where

he was while I sent our comrades up that they might hear the wonderful story.

He was perfectly willing to do as I suggested, for it pleased him to repeat the tale of having tricked the lobster backs, and I wondered not that he should feel a pride in what had been done, therefore I went into the cellar, telling the lads that there was one in the room above who would have speech with them.

"I thought I heard Hiram's voice," Archie said, wheeling about to face me, for he had understood that I would have him believe a stranger had come.

"So it was Hiram's voice," I replied, "and you will not be saddened by that which he has to tell."

"So he had the good luck to get back, did he?" Job Lord asked grimly, and it must have been a grievous disappointment to the man who had believed firmly that Hiram could not remain at liberty ten minutes while on the street.

"Aye, he has come back," I said, "and now there is little question but that you and Seth will go with us to Cambridge," I replied in a tone of triumph, for the longer I had time to realize what arrangements my comrade had made, the stronger was my belief that we would carry the enterprise through in safety.

The pallor of fear came over Seth Jepson's face at these words; but Job Lord gave no token of being disturbed in mind, and for the very good reason, as I afterward came to know, that he did not believe we could work such a scheme.

"When you show that it is possible to take this lad and me through the streets of Boston as prisoners, then I will be willing to believe I stand in

danger of seeing the rebel army in Cambridge; but not before. You are putting all your faith in that safeguard and the order from General Gage, which were stolen from me; but you are like to be in more danger with, than without them, for the king's officers in this town know me full well, and your man Griffin cannot pass himself off in my stead."

Master Lord spoke in a tone of conviction, and this seemed to give Seth a little courage, for straightway the color came into his face again, and he looked up at me with a sickly smile, as if to say that he was not to be taken in by any threats I might make.

It would have pleased me hugely had it been safe to tell the double-faced scoundrel how thoroughly well Hiram had laid his plans, and how readily some of the king's people could be made to swallow the story he told. But I refrained from doing so because it was yet possible something might occur which would give the man an opportunity to reveal our plans to those who might thwart them.

While I sat by the bedside leaning over the prisoners in a menacing attitude, ready to carry out the threats we had made in case they should attempt to raise an outcry, we could hear shouts of laughter from Archie and Harvey as Hiram told of tricking the Britisher, and I was of the opinion that those sounds of mirth went further toward convincing Master Lord that we were in shape to do as I had said, than any words of mine could have done, for he began to look seriously disturbed, turning his head first one way and then the other as if striving to catch a word now and then to get an inkling of what was being said.

Those in the room above did not return to the

cellar for a long time, as it seemed to me; but when they were come below Hiram went to the table and began eating heartily, for we had not taken the trouble to put the food away after our last meal was ended, and said to me in a business-like tone as he ate hurriedly:

"It is close to sunset, lad, and I count on setting forth about my work without delay, for it strikes me we had better leave here as near to nine of the clock as may be. While I am gone you three shall fill your stomachs, and it won't be a bad idea to share the food with the prisoners, for they have a reasonably long journey before them."

Although I had been waiting impatiently for this time to come, his words sent a chill through my heart, and it was as if I had not been prepared to hear them. The knowledge that we were come to the very moment of making as desperate a venture as I dare say had ever been made in Boston, frightened me, and my breath came thick and fast as I asked, much as though I would delay the fateful moment:

"Would it not be better that you wait until night has fully come?"

When I have work on hand that isn't as pleasant as it might be, it's a whim of mine to set about it without delay, and, besides, I'd rather take my chances at the Bridewell before nine of the clock than afterward."

"It makes little difference what time you set out, for you'll spend the remainder of the night, whether you go late or early, in prison," Master Lord growled, and Hiram made answer with a laugh:

"I shall be back within an hour, my two-faced friend, and my coming will be the signal for your

setting out to visit in Cambridge those over whose eyes you have pulled the wool this many a day."

"I shall believe in going to Cambridge when I get there, and not before," Job Lord said surlily; but I could detect a tone of anxiety such as he had never shown before, which was not to be wondered at, for Hiram acted and spoke like a man who knows beyond a peradventure that matters will go exactly as he has arranged.

I followed Griffin up the ladder when, his hurried repast at an end, he ascended to the room above, and there, while he unbarred the door I asked tremulously:

"What shall we do in case Master Lord's Tory friends come while you are gone?"

"Pay no attention to them, lad; that is the only course. If you remember, Lord said there was no danger of any one's coming until after sunset, which was much the same as telling us that then he expected visitors, therefore it is I am pushing matters forward sooner than would otherwise be the case. Of course there's a chance they may make trouble for us; but if I am not delayed at the Bridewell, we will be on our road to Cambridge before they arrive."

"But suppose you, coming back with Silas, having compassed his release without trouble, find here two or three demanding admittance?"

"Then it will be a case of waiting a short time, and if they persist in hanging around we must take the chances of a fight. I will knock on the shutter as has been agreed upon, and if when Silas and I come in there are others who follow us, we must be ready to do by them as we have by Job Lord; but I'm hoping we won't be put to that trouble."

Hiram laughed as he spoke these last words, yet I could not believe that it was from mirth, but rather a desire to hearten me by letting it appear he had no fear as to the final result, when all the while I knew there must be in his mind many a question as to whether he could play his part before the officers of the Bridewell, as he had with the thick-headed sergeant.

Then he went out with never a word of farewell, and strode off into the gloom, walking steadily with head upright like the true man he had ever shown himself to be, and I closed and barred the door while a fervent but unspoken prayer went up from my heart that it might be permitted him to pass unscathed through the danger which menaced, because of the justness of the Cause for which he labored.

Again we three lads sat near the prisoners in what was very like fear. I know for my part that I was trembling so violently that I failed in attempting to take up a bit of meat in order to carry out Hiram's instructions, and I know full well that any one close by might have heard the beating of my heart.

"We are not filling our stomachs as Hiram commanded," Archie cried, striving to appear light-hearted as he rose to his feet and set about arranging the provisions on the table so they might look more palatable. "Everything must be in readiness for a quick start when he comes back, and eating is the first of the duties to be performed."

"You'll have plenty of time to eat 'twixt now and his return," Master Lord growled. "The next person who enters this house will be one of his majesty's officers, come to learn how General Gage's order passed from my possession into that of the rebels'."

We made no reply to this remark, not being in a

mood to bandy words with the villain, for all our thoughts and hearts had gone out with Hiram, while in fancy we could see him meeting with suspicion when he was come to the Bridewell, and finally clapped into a cell without having been so near Silas as to have speech with him.

I had no desire for food, and doubtless my comrades felt much the same; but yet we ate because of having been told so to do, and forced the meat down our throats when it was like to choke us.

Seth Jepson was not as averse to filling his stomach as were we, and ate greedily when Harvey fed him, while Master Lord positively refused to accept a mouthful of anything save water, of which he drank eagerly at short intervals, thus telling me that there was, despite all his brave words, a fear in his heart which parched his tongue.

Now because it was past sunset, when, according to what Job Lord had said some time before, there might be danger of Tory visitors, we took all precautions to prevent our prisoners from crying out. In fact, Archie proposed that we gag them then and there; but I, believing Hiram, even though he succeeded in all his purpose, would be long delayed, had no heart to cause them suffering which might be avoided. I proposed that we pull the bed out from the wall so that he could sit with bare knife by the side of Seth, while I looked after the man who had deceived our people so many days, and once more we promised to take their worthless lives without compunction if they raised their voices ever so slightly.

The time passed slowly, wearingly, painfully on, and there we sat by the side of the prisoners ready to take their lives if need be, while Harvey paced

to and fro, or ascended the ladder to the upper room only to descend, until the noise of his footsteps well nigh drove me to distraction, and I cried out that unless he remained quiet I should lose my senses.

"You lost them when you embarked in such an enterprise as this of making me prisoner," Job Lord snarled. "But what could be expected of three boys, led on by a crazy man? I would have set your comrade free, and sent you on your way in safety; but that you must needs upset all my plans."

"The setting of Silas free and sending us back to our friends was not a part of your plan, Job Lord," I said in a low tone, fearing lest even then some one might be approaching the house; but determined to thrash the matter out with the double-faced villain, if for no other purpose than to occupy the time which was dragging so painfully.

"How else could it be, since I failed to deliver you up to the British?" he asked with an air of innocence. "Had I been so minded, you would have been made prisoners within an hour after coming into this house, and the fact that you were not taken into custody shows that I was playing honestly with you."

"Which proves that you had some plan in mind which could be made to work more of harm to the Cause if we were held here," I said, and then there came into my mind Hiram's words when he was telling the story of the British sergeant, and I added sharply, as if having discovered all his scheming, "We were to be held here as bait in a trap for some of our people whom you hoped to catch, and who would be more of value to General Gage than we three lads."

He turned his eyes toward me quickly, as a deep

flush overspread his face, and I knew full well that I had hit the mark while repeating much the same as Hiram had invented for the benefit of the sergeant.

I continued to dwell upon the matter, hoping he might be provoked into telling me for what purpose he counted on taking from the Bridewell one of our people who had been captured at Breed's hill; but the scoundrel was sharp enough to hold his peace regardless of what I said, never letting out a word that could serve as an inkling to that portion of the plan.

As I sat there by his side, my ears strained to catch the first sound which should tell of Tory visitors or of Hiram's return, I believed I knew it was Silas Brownrigg whom he would have selected from among the prisoners, and that he had been trying to keep us quiet, not daring to bring the lad down from the Bridewell until the last moment lest we should insist on leaving Boston immediately afterward.

Once such a thought came into my mind, I repeated it to him, catching again a glimpse of the dark flush which told, to my mind at least, that the blow had struck home.

Archie must have been in much the same frame of mind as was I before beginning this conversation with Job Lord, for now he cried out sharply, as if the sound of my voice jarred upon his quivering nerves:

"In the name of all that's good, Luke Wright, hold your peace! We can't better ourselves by bandying words with such as Master Lord, and it may be some one from the outside will hear you."

Even as he spoke there came to our ears distinctly three smart raps on the outer door, and I leaned over Master Lord with my knife upraised, for I knew that now was come our time of greatest peril.

CHAPTER XVIII

TURNING THE TRICK

ARCHIE glanced up at me with a look of fear on his face, as he whispered in a tremulous voice:

"Don't take any chances!" and, softly making his way to the center of the room, he took from the floor Harvey's coat, which had been thrown there when we were minded to gag Seth Jepson. This he gave to me nervously, and, holding the knife between my teeth, I rolled one end of it into a wad such as would fit snugly into the mouth of that man who had counted on delivering us over to the Britishers.

Master Lord opened his jaws without waiting to be bidden, for he must have seen on my face a determination to put an end to his career of treachery at the lightest token of making an outcry.

While I was doing this, Harvey, understanding the need of securing both the prisoners beyond any possibility they could do us a mischief by raising their voices, tore off the sleeve of his shirt, and Archie speedily thrust it into Seth Jepson's mouth.

When this had been done there seemed little chance either of the captives could do more than give utterance to moans; but, lest they might succeed in loosening their bonds, I whispered to Harvey:

"You must stay here and keep sharp watch over them, while Archie and I go to the room above."

"To what end?" he asked in surprise, and I replied hurriedly:

"Hiram may return at any moment, and we must be ready to open the door for him."

Just then the summons was repeated more sharply than before, and I dared not linger to explain to Harvey what had been agreed upon between Hiram and myself, therefore, motioning for Archie to follow, I went up the ladder with all possible speed, yet at the same time taking extra good care, as may be supposed, not to make so much of noise as could be heard by those on the outside.

Once on the floor above I halted to whisper in Archie's ear that which was to be done in case Hiram returned before these unwelcome visitors had departed, and meanwhile we could hear voices on the outside, as if those who awaited the opening of the door were discussing among themselves the cause of Master Lord's delay in giving them entrance.

Involuntarily Archie looked around hurriedly for something which would serve him as a weapon in case we should be obliged to give battle, and, thus reminded that we would be at a disadvantage unless having other than our bare fists with which to strike a blow, I followed his example.

Nothing fitting met my gaze save a three-legged stool which had been thrown in one corner, the top shattered, and this I seized hastily, finding it possible to pull out one of the legs without making any noise worth mentioning.

Archie armed himself with a second leg, and I laid the third up where it might be come at conveniently in case, by any mischance, one of us should need a spare weapon.

Verily it seemed as if a kind Providence was watching over us, for no sooner were we thus prepared to meet Job Lord's Tory friends, if perchance it became necessary to give them entrance, when we heard loud voices, as if other visitors had come up, and Archie took me by the hand to hearten himself as well as me, for now did it seem certain a conflict was near at hand.

One can the better understand what a long head was Hiram Griffin's, when I set it down that before leaving the house he had lighted a tallow dip, leaving it in one corner of the room where the feeble rays of light could not be seen through the crevices of the shutter, and but for his forethought in this regard we would have been in darkness, which is the same as saying we must find ourselves at a great disadvantage in event of a fight with Master Lord's friends.

Archie and I stood within three paces of the door, still clasping each other by the hand and striving to hear what was being said on the outside to the end that we might have some inkling of how many had come, when two loud, deliberate knocks on the shutter told that Hiram Griffin was returned.

My heart literally ceased beating for the instant, and it seemed as if I was in danger of suffocation, so great was my excitement and anxiety. Hiram had come back from the Bridewell; but had he brought with him Silas Brownrigg?

Whether he had or no, it was necessary we open the door without delay, and at the same time stand ready for a rough and tumble fight, because there was no question but that those who first demanded admittance were still there, while it was also positive

Hiram had decided upon carrying into execution the plan agreed upon before he set out.

Motioning Archie to take station on one side of the door where he might be ready to strike a blow at the first opportunity, I whispered in a tremulous voice:

"Be careful not to miss your aim, and put sufficient of strength into the blow to bring down your man. Hiram will send the Tories in first, as a matter of course."

Then, with all the blood in my body seemingly surging into my head, I opened the door, and on the instant heard Hiram say in an exceedingly friendly tone:

"Enter, good sirs. Master Lord will return within a short time to conclude the business concerning which you squabbled the other night."

These words were spoken, no doubt, to warn Archie and me that there could be no question as to the character of those to whom they were addressed, and I raised the leg of the stool high above my head, understanding full well that if we failed of overcoming them at the onset, our race in Boston town had come to a speedy end.

Unfortunately it so chanced that both Archie and I struck at the man who was in the lead, and the fellow had no more than got well across the threshold when he pitched headlong, as an ox falls under the axe of the butcher.

Even as this was done I could see that the second man attempted to leap backward, a cry of fear escaping his lips, and my heart grew cold, for it needed not any one should tell me that if he succeeded in giving us the slip the lobster backs would

soon learn what kind of a trick we had striven to play.

I might have understood, however, that Hiram Griffin stood in readiness to guard against any such danger, and even as the fear came into my heart he had leaped upon the shoulders of the fellow who strove to turn back, the weight of his body sending both himself and his captive into the room.

A fourth figure leaped nimbly in and aided me in closing the door, therefore I understood that the game at the Bridewell had been played without an error, for it could be none other than Silas Brownrigg who followed Hiram so closely.

There was no time for greetings or rejoicing; but I did delay sufficiently long to ask in a low tone:

"Were there only two?"

"No more," Silas cried quickly as he leaped to aid Hiram, who was struggling with the fellow he had thrust into the room, and verily the Tory was putting up a stout fight.

"Gag him!" Hiram cried even while the two were rolling here and there so rapidly that it was with difficulty we could, in that faint light, distinguish friend from foe, and Archie sacrificed a sleeve of his shirt, rolling it into a wad as he stood ready to thrust it into the Tory's mouth at the first opportunity.

The fellow whom Archie and I had stricken down was sprawled out on the floor upon his face, like one dead, and I knew we had nothing to fear from him for some time to come, even if the life yet remained in his body, therefore I took a hand in the battle Hiram was waging so desperately.

With us three lads to lend a hand, the struggle was soon brought to an end, and when we had

bound and gagged the stranger so securely that he could not have made the slightest sound had his life depended on it, I turned to Silas, crushing his hands in mine as I cried, giving no heed to the possibility that there might be more enemies on the outside:

"We have got you, lad, from out the lion's jaws! How was it done?"

"I am yet bewildered," Silas replied as if in a maze. "Hiram had with him a lobster back, who walked with us to the corner of the lane, and therefore we had no opportunity for conversation."

"You can do your tongue wagging when we are clear of this blooming town," Hiram cried sharply. "Stories will keep; but there's no telling how soon the wind may shift against us, for we are sailing mightily close-hauled. What about this lover of the king's?" and he stooped over the man whose head had received Archie's blow as well as mine.

There was little need to spend much time in the examination. It was certain he yet breathed; but more than that could not be said, and Hiram cried as he rose to his feet:

"Now then, lads, move lively, for we must be under way within the next five minutes, or take the chances of stopping here longer than will be pleasant."

"Are any of the lobster backs suspicious?" I asked in a fever of fear, and he replied in a grim tone:

"The lieutenant at the Bridewell failed to understand why Job Lord did not come in person for the prisoner, and save that he feared to set awry some plan of General Gage's, he would have held me there till word could be sent to headquarters. There's no telling how soon he may get word to those who

will come to find out if everything is as it should be."

Even while speaking Hiram was descending the ladder, at the foot of which Harvey stood white-faced, with staring eyes, for he had no means of knowing how the battle was going, and I could understand full well in what a turmoil must have been his mind.

"It's all right, lad," Hiram said reassuringly as he laid his hand on Harvey's shoulder. "Pull yourself together, for we must make a quick flitting. Best carry Seth up stairs, so he may have company while we are gone."

"I thought it was agreed he would go with us," I cried hotly, not of the mind to lose one of our prisoners even though we yet stood in so much of danger.

"We can't take the chances of two, as matters stand now, and Job Lord is the more valuable to our friends in Cambridge," Hiram said, speaking hurriedly as he began to cast off the bonds from the man's feet. "The lobster back who went with me to the Bridewell knows I was given but one, and he is to aid us in embarking, therefore to have two would cause a suspicion to enter even his thick head."

Hiram had Master Lord in shape for walking by this time; but the fellow flatly refused to rise from the bed, declaring that his limbs were so cramped he had no control over them.

"It will be well that you get them into shape in short order, for we count on taking you with us, or leaving you here dead, and there is little time in which to make a choice," Hiram said in a tone which

gave proof that his were no idle words. "Carry the boy up the ladder, and leave him on the floor," he added to me, and this Harvey and I did with all speed, while Archie and Silas stood by to lend our leader a hand if so be he might need it.

I had no opportunity of hearing whether Master Lord made further protest against doing as he had been commanded; but it seemed to me that Harvey and I had no sooner laid Seth Jepson by the side of the Tory who had been so severely injured, than Hiram appeared at the top of the ladder with the double-faced scoundrel by his side.

"Do you know where the ship-yard that is owned by a man named Edes may be located?" Hiram asked immediately he had come up into the room, and we lads soon gave him to understand that the place was familiar to us.

"Then lead the way, stepping out lively, for I am not minded to linger here many minutes," he said sharply, turning to seize Master Lord by the collar.

"But what about these fellows?" I asked, pointing to Seth and the two men. "Are they to be left helpless and gagged?"

"There is no other way out of it, and I dare venture to say they would not have any heart-ache to leave us in even a worse plight."

"But the wretches will starve to death!" I cried in horror, and Hiram replied grimly:

"I would leave them to such a fate rather than miss taking Job Lord to those whom he has deceived so long; but there is little danger, though I won't say but they'll be mighty uncomfortable for a time. 'Twixt now and morning one or more of this scoundrel's friends will come to concoct yet fur-

ther harm to the Cause, and, if we leave the door unlocked, they'll be released sooner than is deserved."

Archie would have lingered to make Seth a bit more comfortable by loosening the gag ever so little; but Hiram literally drove him toward the door as he cried in an angry tone, which I dare say was assumed to cover his nervousness:

"Look after yourself, lad, and give over being soft-hearted about such curs. We've got no easy job before us, and are needing every moment of time." Then to Master Lord he added, "If you are minded to make any noise as we walk through the streets, remember what I have threatened to do, and understand that it's my belief I'd be doing a good deed to put you out of the world!"

It seemed to me there was little need for such caution. The traitor was yet gagged, and strive as he might could not have done other than moan ever so softly.

We left the house which had been our prison, in haste, as if already the pursuers were at our heels, and when we stepped into the open air I recalled that which Hiram had said regarding the lobster back who was to aid us in embarking, therefore whispered to our leader as we went at a swift pace in the direction of the ship-yard:

"Is there not danger the Britisher who went with you to the Bridewell will come to understand that you have made a change of prisoners?"

"That is one of the chances we are taking, lad. I strove to keep him from having a fair look at Silas, and hope the effort was successful. If not, it will be a case of fighting another battle with all the odds against us, for the guard-house is so near at

hand that we could not make much of a disturbance without being overheard by those on duty. Push forward, and do not try to find fresh cause for fear, since we have all of danger before us that I care to think about."

Acting in accordance with Hiram's instructions, we lads pressed closely around Job Lord for the double purpose of hiding him from view as much as possible while at the same time we forced him to a rapid pace, and in silence, save for the heavy breathing of the prisoner caused by the gag, and the sound of our footsteps, we advanced unchallenged to where the skiff was found.

But for the fact that I believed death lurked very closely in our rear, I could have found something comical in the fact that we were being aided in our flight by one of the king's men, who believed he was having a finger in the pie to be baked for the "rebels," and even though I trembled with fear and anxiety, it was impossible to check a smile when I saw the thick-headed Britisher waiting patiently by the water's edge for us to come up.

In order that we might get away the more quickly, he had the skiff afloat, holding her by the painter, and as we approached Hiram thrust Job Lord on board in advance, following so closely as to screen him from view. If the lobster back had previously had any suspicions, he might have noted something strange in the manner of our clustering around the prisoner even after we had taken our places in the boat; but the dull fellow believed he was aiding in what would work injury to those whom he had come across the ocean to kill, and gave heed to nothing save his own part in the enterprise.

As I think of the matter now, it seems almost like

a fairy tale, this story of being aided to escape by one of the king's men, with a squad of soldiers at the guard-house nearby ready to lend a hand in case we needed it; but such was the case, and had it not been so I believe of a verity we had never gone out of Boston town alive, for if the tables had been turned, Master Lord and his friends would have seen to it that we were hanged on one pretext or another.

Whatever the dangers we had encountered, or however narrow the escape, we were free at last, for even though one of the guard-boats overhauled us, the pass signed by General Gage himself would have been enough to insure safe conduct, and when the skiff had been pulled by Harvey and Silas so far from the shore that we could see behind us nothing save the lights that twinkled here and there, it was with difficulty I repressed a shout of triumph.

As it was I could not hold my peace; but, leaning toward Hiram as he sat by Master Lord's side in the stern-sheets, said gleefully:

"We have come out from among the Britishers without a scratch, and in addition to releasing one of our own who was in prison, are taking to Cambridge a spy who might have worked the Cause fatal harm, therefore who shall say that the Minute Boys, if so be you still count yourself one, have not shown themselves able to do the work of men?"

"I sure do count myself one of the Minute Boys, lad, and shall do so till our little muss with the king has come to an end, leaving us colonists on the top of the heap. But say, Luke Wright, this last trick over which we have the right to do a good bit of crowing, has been a close shave. Unless everything

had worked according to our desires, we would have been undone, and I'm thinking the shadow of the gallows was dark over us in that hour when I set off for the Bridewell."

"Tell me what happened there?"

"It isn't much of a story, for the plan worked as if it had been greased, though I'm free to confess that I had but little hope of pulling through when I left you. My heart was thumping fit to burst when I called for the officer on duty, holding my head high as if General Gage had been my brother. The lieutenant who gave me a hearing was by no means the dullard you might have expected him to be, and eyed me in a way that wasn't comforting. Of course I had to explain that Master Lord wasn't quite in condition to venture out, and that I was helping him in setting a trap for the rebels. While you might have counted twenty I felt certain he was minded to send to headquarters to learn if the order was all right, and I made bold to urge that a delay of half an hour would set all our plans awry, which you'll agree was nothing more than solemn truth."

"Then he allowed you to take Silas?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes, after considerable humming and hawing; but I'm of the belief that if the lobster back hadn't been with me it would have been a different matter. The lieutenant couldn't fail of being impressed by the fact that I had come with one of his own kidney as escort, and from this out I shall have a kindly feeling for a red coat, even though I fail to love the one that wears it."

"And now we'll give the officer at the battery the surprise of his life, when we show him Job Lord

as prisoner after he sent us to him with such recommendations as to his loyalty," I cried with a laugh, whereupon Hiram replied gravely:

"If I have my way, we'll give the battery a wide berth, lad, and for two reasons. The first is that I'm not minded to be delayed on the journey to Cambridge, and who can say that the lieutenant wouldn't insist on taking charge of our prisoner, which would be depriving us of the credit we deserve. The second reason is more serious. Because the officer at the battery vouched so strongly for Job Lord, it is barely possible that he may be as great a traitor as our captive, and I'll give him no chance to set his partner free."

"Of course you'll have your way, so far as leading us lads is concerned," I said quickly. "Surely you have earned the right an hundred times over, even though we were disposed to contest it, which we are not. How do you count on getting to Cambridge?"

"We'll pull up the creek as far as is possible to take the skiff, giving our battery as wide a berth as we give those fortifications manned by the Britishers, and, once forced to abandon the craft, set off on the highway, stopping for nothing this side of Cambridge, for the sooner Job Lord's treachery is made known to our people there, the more easy in mind I'll be concerning his being held securely."

And now because of the fact that within the past hour it has been whispered around the encampment that we of the American army are about to strike another blow against the Britishers, and preparations are being made for the march, I must bring this

poor yarn of mine to a speedy close lest I find myself unable to finish it.

As Hiram had said so we did, and before another day was come we were in the American encampment, telling to General Ward all we had learned.

There is little need to say that Job Lord was cared for securely, and Hiram believes that after this movement which seems to be on foot, has been made, the double-faced villain will be hanged for his crimes, more especially since it is now known how much of harm he succeeded in working to the Cause while professing to be devoted to it.

Our people have learned to a certainty that this same Master Lord had been paid regularly by General Gage for his services as traitor; but we can only guess as to why he wanted to hold us prisoners in his house, and at the same time get possession of Silas, for it seems positive the lad was the prisoner whom he counted on taking when he presented the order which Hiram used to such good effect.

My father believes it was Job Lord's aim to hold us lads as a bait to entice some of our prominent people into making a try at succoring us, and thus succeed in delivering to General Gage one or more of the American officers. Hiram declares that if we had made thorough search of the villain's house, it is likely we might have found that which would give us a clue to the whole plot as he had schemed it.

I am of the mind that we remained in the building on Cow lane quite as long as was safe, and it makes little difference what he counted on doing, since we blocked his game and at the same time brought him to grief.

Archie is confident that the day must come when, by getting hold of Seth Jepson once more, as all of us lads believe will be our good fortune, we shall be able to learn no little of Master Lord's villainy which as yet is a secret between himself and his Tory cronies. It is certain that if we ever get the treacherous little traitor in our hands again, he can be made to turn himself inside out, because of being so cowardly that in order to save himself from punishment he will not hesitate to betray his friends.

When we have discovered what Job Lord would have done with us had his career not been cut so short, then shall we most likely learn the cause of what was much the same as a fight between himself and his visitors when we were prisoners in the cellar; but I have very little curiosity regarding this last matter, now that we have come to be members of the army, holding as honorable a position as if we were men grown.

Yes, after the venture into Boston town, and the taking of Job Lord as prisoner, it was allowed that we had the right to be regularly enrolled, and today, when we are making ready to give the king another slap in the face, there is no company of soldiers in the encampment who are seemingly held in higher esteem by our commanders, than the Minute Boys of Boston.

THE END

BRENTANO'S